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THE
ITINERANT,
OR
MEMOIRS OF AN ACTOR.

VOL. IV.

BY S. W. RYLEY.

“ The world’s a stage,
“ And all the men and women merely players;
“ They have their exits and their entrances;
“ And one man, in his time, plays many parts.”
“ SHAKSPEAR.”

LONDON:

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TO

William Roscoe, Esq.

SIR,

HAVING dedicated the three former Volumes of the Itinerant to you, without incurring your displeasure, I am encouraged to hope that the liberty I am again taking will be looked upon with the same indulgence.

Permit me then, without other motive than what proceeds from the highest admiration and respect for the amiability of your character, and the splendor of your talents, once more to subscribe myself.

SIR,

Your highly obliged,

And faithful Servant,

S. W. RYLEY.

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PREFACE
OR
NO PREFACE.

AFTER debating whether a preface was necessary at the commencement of a fourth volume, which my wife rather warmly advocated, from the mere spirit of opposition, as I thought; and, if *necessary*, whether it should be political, satirical, sentimental, or humourous; I was interrupted in my cogitations by Mr. Sneer, an independent gentleman in my neighbourhood; who, having no business of his own, fills up his leisure hours in settling that of other people. Mr. Sneer is nearly connected with the Slingsby and

Backbite families ; and almost too idle to move without assistance, his life is a continual state of ennui. At a snail-like pace he creeps from his house to the terrace—lounges away an hour at the billiard table, calls at the little shop of intelligence ; and when exhausted with these violent efforts, leans against the wall, catching with avidity “ even a tailor’s news.” There is an eagerness always visible in his eye at the commencement of a story, which encreases according to the malignity it possesses ; and a large pinch of snuff, taken with uncommon zest—a sarcastic smile, and a nod, generally betray his impatience to retail, with improvements, to others, what has given such pleasure to himself. Sometimes he does me the honor of dropping in, either to impart the news of the day, or to collect from my unreserved communications food to supply his insatiable craving after gossip and scandal ; and seeing my table covered with papers, enquired into the

nature of my present studies, and whether a continuation of the Itinerant was likely soon to make its appearance ?

Having candidly informed him of my doubts, and the dilemma I was in, respecting a preface : he stroked his chin, adjusted his cravat, and with a confident look of self-importance, as much as to say " I am Sir Oracle," exclaimed, taking at the same time a huge pinch of stratsburg, " It won't do, sir—I tell you it won't do. The public will expect some apology for an intrusion of this kind; the press groans with nonsense, and unless you can give some rational reason for the introduction of your's, though you may pocket a few pounds, you will be quized, lampooned, and cut up with unmerciful severity by all the critics between London and Edinburgh."

I was preparing for a reply, when my wife, for women will be meddling, repeated the word " nonsense!" in a tone

which plainly showed she did not altogether relish the term.

Sneer finding he had overshot the mark, replied, " Pardon me, madam, I did not mean to say that your good husband's work was nonsense; from experience we are led to expect better things: I only meant to observe, that so many flimsy publications are issuing from the press daily, and that as readers frequently form some opinion of a work from the preface, it is an author's interest, as well as duty, to write one, and that to the extent of his ability."

The parson of a distant town happening at that moment to pass the window, Sneer beckoned him in, hoping to obtain an able advocate in favor of his opinion; and after relating the subject of debate, stood with folded arms, in confident expectation of an assenting reply.

Now, the worthy pastor valued himself upon being an author, and his name having appeared on the bottom of the title

page to a sermon, gave him a degree of consequence seldom attained by the first of the literati. "Why, look ye, gentlemen," replied he, comfortably adjusting himself before the fire, with the skirts of his coat under each arm, "a preface is no bad thing as I can very ably testify; at the same time much depends upon the materials it is made of. When I was sheriff's chaplain, I was desired to publish my sermon preached before the judge; to which I annexed a preface much longer than the original discourse—for quality is preferred to quantity in an assize sermon—to swell it out into a two shilling pamphlet; and knowing my patron to be a decided enemy to the Papists, I gave Catholic emancipation a slap o' the chops it won't easily recover; Doctor Duignan's speech was a fool to it. What was the consequence? Why a *douceur* of twenty pounds for my preface, which probably was the only part of the book ever read; and the thanks of the bishop for

my learned and able defence of the church. Now let me advise you to profit by my experience ; help the sale of your work by attention to exalted individuals—speak of their loyalty and patriotism—flatter their vanity—talk of the goodness of their heads and the excellence of their hearts—they'll be sure to give you credit—for we are easily persuaded into a belief of our own superiority—and the effects of such writing will be fame and profit. Whereas, if you expose their weaknesses, or satirise their follies—prove their peculations or their public delinquencies—your book will soon visit the butter shop ; and, as a reward for telling the truth, you will be prosecuted for a libel, and perhaps end your days within the walls of a prison.”

Sneer, during this speech, almost bit his thumb nail off, “ Stop, sir, stop, if you please. This is a very unfair mode of argument — very unfair indeed. Our question is Preface or no Preface? and

you launch out into irrelevant matter, and drive away every idea I meant to advance in reply. Fine words, sir, butter no parsnips, they are like sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, all noise, but no music." The parson smiled. "When you get upon consecrated ground there is no stopping you." "Consecrated ground!" repeated his reverence.

"Yes! I call all schemes of merely worldly profit consecrated ground; for I find the clergy always more eloquent upon these subjects than any other."

The parson's rosy gills became literally purple; and he was preparing a thundering philippic, when Sneer thinking to turn it off with a joke, continued, "I know what you are going to say, parson; consecrated ground is a sacred thing, and ought not to be spoken of with levity. A reverend friend of mine, in the town of Manchester, was so much of your opinion, that he spent great part of his vacant hours in parading his church-yard, lest

filthy dogs might run over, or otherwise profane it; and once flogged two of his scholars for sacrilegiously playing at marbles on a tomb stone. One day, a witty fellow, facetiously called Patten Nat, from his being a maker of pattens, puzzled him by the following reply. The parson was parading as usual with his little stick, guarding his consecrated trust, when to the surprise and horror of his astonished senses, what should approach but the facetious Nat, with impudence unparalleled, wheeling his barrow full of pattens over the sacred dust.

“As soon as our justly enraged divine could recover from the agitation his nerves had sustained by such a heathenish act; foaming with holy and pious zeal, he thus addressed the maker of pattens: “Impious marauder! vile defiler of sacred things! how darest thou wheel thy load of female trumpery over consecrated ground?”

“Nat, being a corpulent man, and not

a little fatigued with his job, was rather glad of an excuse to rest a little from his labour; and being one of those lost beings who care as little for the parson as the clerk, and less for the church-yard than either; pulled off his hat, not out of respect, but to wipe the falling dew from his forehead; then scratching his nearly bald pate, and looking archly at the exasperated divine, replied, "Why, please your reverence, I know the church-yard is consecrated, and as I borrowed the barrow from your sexton, I did not know but it was consecrated too."

"This unseemly levity threw my friend into such a paroxysm of holy rage, that seizing the bone of contention he attempted to overturn it; but was stopped by Nat's muscular arm; who at the same time exclaimed, "Hold, hold, sir! don't defile the hallowed dust! For though the barrow may be consecrated, the pates are not; so if you please I'll wheel them home." He had scarcely recom-

menced his toil, when a fit of rhiming seized him, and once more stopping, with much apparent respect he again addressed the parson,

“ Sir, just for information’s sake
I’ll—please you—your opinion take,
Since none th’ extent, ’tis plain, can tell
Of consecrated ground so well,
And how far men may walk, or stand,
Without profaning holy land ;
I’d therefore ask—since *breadth* you know,
What *depth* does consecration go ?
Because pollutions may take place
Beneath the earth—as well as o’ th’ face ;
For I’m informed a common sewer,
That oft conveys things most impure,
Under this hallowed church-yard runs,
Conveying mud away by tons.
If so—unless, good Sir, you’ve luck
That impious scavenger, the duck
May gorge in consecrated ——.”

What answer the parson would have given to Sneer’s satirical story, I cannot say ; for at that moment the rattling of a carriage announced an arrival ; and his reverence gave a cry, and almost a caper at sight of the crest of an exalted Prelate. Adjusting his periwig, and assuming an air of importance, “ As I live,

gentlemen," said he, 'tis the bishop of St. David's! Excuse my abruptness, but I must run to the Inn to receive his Lordship." And away bustled the parson, leaving Sneer in a state of complete mortification, that he could not, under any feasible pretence, also make his bow to a bishop. For to be acquainted with great folks, that is, great fortunes—great titles—and perhaps great fools, was Sneer's besetting weakness; and his recognition of an old acquaintance was commonly regulated by the rank and consequence of those with whom he happened to be in company. Thus, if his walking companion was only a rich tradesman, perhaps a neighbour might be favored with a "how d'ye do?" If a member of parliament, a distant nod was all the notice; but if perchance a Lord condescended to talk familiarly, a mist came over his eyes, that completely shut out all objects except the *great* man.

"Ah," exclaimed Sneer, looking envi-

ously after his receding friend, "there goes a right parson! Now would he, with true clerical servility, clean the bishop's shoes, soften paper, or do any dirty work his superior may require, in hopes of dropping into the first vacant living. Good morning. Write a preface by all means, and if any one blames you, tell them I recommended it." Away went Sneer, and in the course of the evening was seen to bow and cringe to the bishop, as servilely as any parson in the land.

Still I was undecided about a preface. For though Sneer was positive, and the parson recommended it, provided I wrote what he called a *proper* preface; yet my wife, whose judgment I thought at least equal to theirs, remained unconvinced. In order, therefore, to add more strength to my cause, and thereby remove her objections, I resolved to consult some of my erudite friends in a neighbouring town, who weekly assembled under the title of "*The Conjuror's Club.*"

They were a motley group, consisting of the lettered and the unlettered, the witty and the would-be witty. Some were speakers, others writers; some were thinkers, others drinkers; and each passed his judgment with equal confidence on every subject; though their opinions varied as much as the colours of the chameleon; they were never known to agree except on the merits of good eating and drinking, and that was always carried *nem. con.*

In this society there were men of strong minds, and much reading; and their advice it was my wish to procure. But how to select the ore from the rubbish—the corn from the chaff, was a matter of some difficulty; for the literati were uncertain in their attendance; and the opinion of mere talkers I valued less than my own.

The differences of opinion that existed in this eccentric society, and the noise they generally made, might justly have given them the title of the *Botheration Club*.

Lancashire, Yorkshire, Norfolk, Middlesex, Scotland, Germany, and France, supplied the members : printers, booksellers, lawyers, doctors, auctioneers, French teachers, German brokers, with many other callings, helped to fill up this patched jacket of opposition; and when in controversy, by way of giving distinct opinions, they all spoke together, which was always the case after supper; the confusion of *Babel* was order and regularity to the confusion and noise of the *conjurers*.

Not being a member of this learned body myself, I trespassed on a friend to introduce the subject of my preface; and as I waited the result in an adjoining room, I could over-hear, though not always understand, their conversation. At the moment of my entrance they were in full cry on the subject of field sports. Several members, I suppose, had previously given an opinion, for Mr. Hardword, the printer, in a still, small voice, which spoke a kind of——fear——a dread of giving

offence—observed, “With due deference, gentlemen, to what has been said—or was intended to be said—for with sedulous attention, and close observation, I have listened—naturally expecting from such a body of the literati those corruscations of genius which flash upon the mind like electirc fluid, and irradiate all within; yet I must presume to say, without wishing to *objurgate*, or cause *exacerbation*, that, either owing to my *paucity* of conception, or *vacuity* of understanding, what hath been advanced appears to me so *obtuse*, and withal delivered with a *lentitude* so *lugubrious*, as nearly to produce *somnolence*; and that when on the confines of a *felicitous* hope of brilliant information which should illumine the soul, nothing is produced, according to my *supputation*, but an opaque body of confusion, which affords a *synopsis* of——nothing. Having ventured to differ from my learned and worthy friends on their method of treating the subject, I beg leave to ob-

serve, that the more barbarous the times, the more favourable they were to field sports ; and the more cruelty they exercised towards animals over whom they had power——.” Thus far I had heard without interruption ; for, contrary to their usual custom, the members were solemnly attentive ; when some person was seized with a fit of sneezing, which lasted so long, owing, I suppose, to his attempt to suppress it, that the best part of Hardword’s speech was lost ; and the only sentence I could next distinguish was interrupted with “ give me leave—give me leave,” by Mr. Blotherum, the bookseller, out of breath with long stifling his brilliant and luminous ideas—ideas which crowded to the mind’s door with such rapidity and force, that they became wedged together, till none could escape singly, but out they rushed in unintelligible clusters ;—I say Mr. Blotherum, breathless with haste and agitation, sputtered out a few sentences, so intermixed with “ give

me leave,——a——wha——the——that is——” that to me they were incomprehensible. Then, looking at his watch, with an air of haste, as if he had outstayed some appointment, and snatching up his hat, which he placed the wrong side before, quitted the room, muttering something about the stupidity of the company.

As the door was left open I had now a full command of the circle ; and a corpulent personage, whose face resembled a full moon on the dial of a clock, next claimed attention. “ De sports of de field,” he observed “ are sanctioned both by nature and law. By nature de bulldog was designed to bait de bull ; de grayhound to catch de hare ; de hound to run de fox ; and by de excellent laws of dis country ve are authorised to use dem for dose great and noble purposes. Did not dat great legislator, de immortal Windham, prove dat bull-baiting was for de good of de country, in opposition to de foolish outcry of de jacobins ?”

“ Really,” interrupted Mr. Punwell, a tall, athletic, person, who sat puffing fumes from an odoriferous Havannah segar ; “ really, Mr. Swabson, you pay the jacobins a high compliment; by assigning them the angelic part of peace-makers between man and beast, you allow them to be friends of humanity at least. I shall begin to suspect your *loyalty* if you proceed in this manner to praise the *Jacobins*.”

I soon found, from various winks and nods, that this was touching a discordant string. The foreigner, for prudential reasons no doubt, wished to be thought a champion of loyalty, and the least hint to the contrary threw him into a phrenzy.— “ Vat is dat you say?” cried he with much warmth, “ Suspect me who have corresponded with members of de legislative body for de good of de town ! Me, who regularly read de Courier and de Sun papers ? I’ll tell you vat, Mr. Punwell, if dere be any suspicious person in de

room, *dou art de man!* Dis palaver about humanity is all vat you call fudge; and de opposition cries about patriotism and de good of de country, is all for *de fish* and *de loaf.*”

Punwell, after puffing away a cloud of smoke, laid down his Havannah tube, and with a smile of anticipated victory, prepared to give the broad-faced orator an answer. “I observe with pleasure, friend Swabson,” said he, “that each subject of debate in this society, is favoured with *your full countenance.*” This little sally had the desired effect; it produced a general smile. “I likewise observe,” he continued, “that let the discourse be ever so opposite, you never fail to torture it into something political; with which it has no more connexion than I have with a *German sausage.* What your motive can be I don’t immediately conceive;—there are no places vacant either in the excise or customs, or from your known

patriotism, staunch loyalty, and love for this country, you might perhaps be *persuaded* to devote your talents to her service ; and the advantage would be obvious ; for though you *said* nothing, a considerable *weight* would be added to the *party*."

The former smile now increased to a laugh, in which Swabson endeavoured to join, in order to conceal the mortification this home thrust conveyed ; but the attempt was vain ; risibility refused to aid the deception, and Punwell's triumph was complete.

The next speaker was Mr. Puff, the auctioneer. "I'll tell you what, gentlemen," said he, "when an *article* is *put up*——I beg pardon, I mean to say when a subject is brought forward in this company, all personality should be avoided, and the *best bidder*——no—I mean the best speaker is he who avoids irrelevant matter. Observations on natural defects,

either personal or mental, should never be exposed to *sale*——pho—I mean exposed to derision in a public society.”

“Keep out of the *shop* my good friend,” replied Punwell, “keep out of the *shop* if you can. At present you are, as the man says in the play, nailed to the counter like a bad shilling. But what has all this to do with field sports? Can they be justified on any principle of humanity?”

“To be sure they can, sir,” interrupted Munchausen, a plump, well-fed member, raising his voice, and pronouncing the word *sir*, in an emphatic and drawling manner. “To be sure they can, si-r. These sports are indulgencies to the animals, and therefore humane, si-r. They like it, si-r. Does not the bull look with eager expectation for the dog, si-r, as much as to say—where is he?—Come on my boy! It’s a matter of ambition—of honourable contention, si-r; and if the bull could speak, I’ll be bound to say no persuasion could draw him from the con-

test. Look at the game cock, si-r, that valiant, never-yielding warrior. When he first beholds his adversary, how majestically he walks, filled with delight at the happy thought of being crowned with conquest ; now he erects his crest—now he pecks the ground, spreading his feathers like a shield in token of defiance : at length, unable to with-hold, he flies into the conflict with as much eagerness as a lover would fly into the arms of his mistress. Then look at the hare, si-r, she enjoys the chase as much as the hounds, si-r, and if they do not follow up in pursuit as quick as she expects, she'll stand still, and listen, and look about, as much as to say, ' why don't you come up, you lazy rascals ? ' Then she'll double up and down the field merely to puzzle them, and sit down to be an eye-witness of the sport. Oh ! it's all a mistaken notion, si-r, there's no cruelty at all in it."

The re-entrance of Blotherum gave a new turn to the discourse. All hurry and

bustle, with his hat crushed on in fifty shapes, he produced a book from his pocket : “ Now, gentlemen,” vociferated he, “ I can settle the dispute ; see what my friend Malthus says.” He then read, with unintelligible quickness, a page from Malthus, on population, to prove how necessary it was for the animal creation to destroy each other.

Swabson shook his fat sides—the auctioneer smiled—Monsieur, the French teacher, “ screwed up his small mouth till it resembled the aperture of a poor-box,”—but Munchausen loudly exclaimed : “ You are mad, si-r—you must be mad. What has human population to do with the subject, si-r ? Nothing at all, si-r. So put Malthus in your pocket, and be quiet, si-r.”

Blotherum foaming with ten thousand replies could not utter one of them intelligibly. In vain he exclaimed, “ Give me leave—give me leave, gentlemen,”—nothing more would come forth, till stamp-

ing on the floor, he made shift to sputter out, "You are all d—n'd fools," and precipitately left the house. "It certainly is a great loss to society," observed Punwell, sarcastically, "that Mr. Blotherum is so irritable. He has, I dare say, a wonderful flow of ideas, if he could but give them utterance," "True," rejoined Hardword, "his conceptions are at times highly *felicitous*, and when cool, his arguments are *rather* convincing : but irritation of mind, to which he is a martyr, causes a degree of *obmutescence*, painful to himself and *exacerbating* to his friends."

I had been so completely amused with the eccentricities of the *Conjuror's club*, that the purpose of my coming had quite escaped my memory ; indeed, the evening was too far advanced for *sober* reflection, and on a subject, to me, of importance, where calm judgment and sound reasoning were required, I conceived a postponement was desirable, and for that purpose had decided to call my friend out of

the room, when my attention was again roused by a question from Punwell, which promised further entertainment. "Pray, Mr. Munchausen," said he, passing an arch look round the company, "amidst your voluminous reading, as we are speaking of the brute creation, did you ever dip into the natural history of the bat?"

"The bat, si-r," replied the other, "to be sure I have, si-r. It is a link in the chain of creation between the bird and the beast, and differs from variation of climate more than any other animal, si-r. In America it exceeds a *pigeon* in size, and in some of the Leeward Islands it is said to be as large as a *goose*, si-r, and dangerous, very dangerous, si-r, carrying *infants* away by *force*, even from the *mother's breast*!"

"Indeed!" said Punwell, without appearing to doubt his veracity, "in *this* country I have seen them nearly as large as a *mouse*; and once witnessed a severe

contest between one of them and a particular genus of the bug tribe.”

“What, sir!” roared out Munchausen, “the bug! A small creature—an insect!—no contest at all, si-r.”

“Oh! sir,” replied his adversary, “this was a most astonishing animal, nearly as large as a *walnut*. The battle was long and severe; but at length the bug, from superior strength, drove his proboscis into the ear of the bat, which produced immediate death.”

“Astonishing!” replied he, “It may be true for all that, si-r; but I’ll examine Linnæus, si-r, and Buffon, on the subject, and doubtless shall learn something of this amazing creature. Pray, how is it classed, si-r?—under what mark of distinction is it known?” “Why, sir,” replied Punwell. “Buffon gives it several distinct titles, as the *bug of bugs*—the *buggy-bo*, &c.; but Linnæus is more decided, and tells us it is of the same genus,

and classed with the tribe of the *humbugs* ! ”

The last word was scarcely uttered when the whole company burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, in which I heartily joined ; for a neater piece of raillery, or a rebuke more deservedly applied, never came under my observation. Munchausen was mortified in proportion as he valued himself on his knowledge of natural history ; for his veracity upon subjects of this kind had been too often disputed, to be either new, or very nicely felt : but ridicule inflicts a wound few people have philosophy enough to bear. Munchausen was not one of the few, and the *humbug* was returned by a tumbler of negus, aimed with nice discrimination at the head of Punwell. The candles stood in an horizontal line between the adversaries, and not able to withstand the extinguishing properties of the opposing liquid, were fairly quenched ere the vinous beverage reached its destination.

Punwell was not in the habit of receiving favors of this kind quietly. A blow, meant for Munchausen, found its way in the dark, to the no less fat chops of Swabson, who, thus unexpectedly attacked, roared out, "Vat is dat for?" But without waiting for an answer, he made a precipitate retreat on his hands and knees to the far corner of the room; and in his hasty and unseemly flight upset both friends and foes.

The uproar of the sprawling crew soon brought the waiter with a light, when I perceived two medical gentlemen seated at some distance from the immediate scene of action, who wisely keeping possession of their chairs, escaped the disasters too visible amongst the rest.

Swabson, whose nasal organ had come in contact with the misguided fist of his opponent, being, with some difficulty, placed on a chair, began to feel his lacerated proboscis, from which the blood flowed copiously; at the same time ex-

claiming, "dat he was sure de bone was broke." This awakened the attention of the surgeon, who, till the fracture was pronounced, remained supine ; but finding something was likely to accrue in the way of business, pulled off his gloves, and displayed a pair of milk white hands, meant doubtless to signify wonderful attention to the delicacy of operation. After travelling a considerable time over the vast surface of the German's countenance, he laid hold of the offended feature, and pulled it to the right and left with such force that the afflicted patient roared with pain ; at length, taking out his instruments, he recommended immediate amputation.— "Vat !" exclaimed Swabson, rising from his chair, "cut off my nose ! I vill be hanged if you do."

This hasty and premature advice awakened the attention of the physician, whose round, good-natured, face indicated kindness and benevolence. He advanced to the groaning foreigner, and in

a more gentle manner, though without laying aside his segar, examined the part, and declared amputation unnecessary.—“Retire home, Mr. Swabson,” continued he, “and with the assistance of digitalis to prevent fever, and elixir paregoric to procure rest, in the morning you will find all *comfortable*.”

“The sight of a doctor is sometimes better than physic.” This adage was never more strongly verified than in the present instance; for the cheerful voice and pleasant countenance of the last speaker inspired the remainder of the party. Munchausen had vanished during the confusion, whilst Hardword and the French teacher, who, in the beginning of this affray, had taken refuge under a large dining table; hearing matters take an amicable turn, began slowly to emerge. “Is there a cessation of hostilities?” said the former, “Monsieur and I have lain *perdue* in hopes of making a felicitous re-

treat; but since a flag of truce has been exchanged, we may venture to remain."

"Vat is all dis?" cried monsieur, becoming couragious as danger decreased, "by Gar I vould *rip* horse any man dat did break a my nose!"

"Is it to be endured," continued Hardword, "that gentlemen cannot come into company, but this Cacoethes Loquendi must lead to hostilities? But friend Punwell will be aut Ceasar aut nullus." "Not exactly," replied Punwell, "but it is beyond endurance that a man cannot take his *glass* without paying through the *nose* for it."

Hardword now observed that the late engagement had produced a strong stimulus to *mastication*, and calling the waiter, enquired the lowest *price* of a *Welch rabbit*?

Feeling disposed to follow this example, I adjourned to my temporary quarters, and indulged in a rabbit and a pint of

porter ; to which I might add, if I were not afraid of incurring the censure of Hardword, a *glass* of *grog* and a *pipe*.

I was beginning to despair of sound and impartial advice, when it struck me that an able and sincere opinion must result from applying to men of sound worth, sterling ability, and tried integrity. The foremost of this class in Lancashire, or perhaps in any other county, appeared to me in the person of Mr. Roscoe. It is strange this should never have occurred before, but better late than never ; so away I posted towards the dwelling of this great and good man, when I was prevented by the sudden appearance of Punwell and his friend Freeman. Punwell I knew from many years experience, possessed a very superior understanding, though tinctured with strong eccentricities ; but his heart had no drawback ; that was charitable, humane, generous, and sincere. Freeman was rather a new

acquaintance, but his literary talents were publicly and generally acknowledged.

The evening was fast closing, and the street an improper place for conversation such as I sought; we therefore adjourned, to a tavern, and I consoled myself for my former disappointments, in having found at last two characters on whose judgment I could rely.

The tavern happened to be crowded in every part; but there was a large Club room above stairs, into which as strangers we were admitted by leave of the president, who rose at our entrance, and begged we would be seated. "There are no members to be made this night," he observed, "on account of the great news, but I suppose, Gentlemen, you are *jannock*."* Then by way of toast he roared out "Church and King, and down

* A sort of bread peculiar to Lancashire. Likewise a cant term, signifying staunch, true, firm to any cause.

with the rump," which was enthusiastically swallowed by the whole club.

Finding it impossible to seclude ourselves without giving general offence, I whispered a wish to retire, and seek a less frequented tavern; but Punwell, who enjoyed a frolic, and anticipated half an hour's amusement from the company into which we had been unexpectedly thrown, seating himself, we, of course, followed his example. The above loyal and constitutional sentiment was succeeded by an awkward pause—an uncomfortable silence, which frequently takes place on the intrusion of strangers; and which we, as the cause, were in duty bound to dispel. By way of breaking the ice, I asked my right-hand neighbour the name of this enlightened society. "Sir," replied he, "we are called the Shakenbräin Society, the most loyalest club in the known world. Those two lusty gentlemen you see seated by the president, Colonel Corduroy and Major Thickset, are come over as dele-

gates from the Manchester Shakenbrains, to invit   our Chairman to a Church and King dinner. They are nice men I promise you; none of your grumblers—no flinchers at the bottle—hearty cocks sound and true—that’s your sort!”

The President now stood up, “Gentlemen, I’ll give you a toast, that I call a *nailer*. May the devil ride rough-shod over Boney and all the French nation!” This benevolent sentiment was drank with three times three. The worthy Manchester Delegates was next given; when Major Thickset rose, laid down his pipe, discharged a quantity of saliva, with a loud spirt under the table, and prepared for a speech, which with various repetitions and contortions both of face and limbs, ran thus: “*Mester* President, I should not have gotten upon my legs to thank you for the great honor you have done us in drinking our healths, but to oblige my friend and commanding officer, the Colonel; but he made me promise to

be spokesman, because, he said, I could hit the nail upon the head better nor he could. I *dunnot* pretend *Mester* President, to be gifted with the *Gob*, as we say'n in Manchester, but then I have it here," laying his hand upon his *right* breast, "and am always ready to take advice from higher larn'd folk, and hear reason from those who know what's what, better nor I pretend to do. When I was i' th' jury box at Lancaster *sizes*, a question was put to me about hanging a *mon*, but I told 'em plump and plain, I was not qualified to judge, and I'd be ruled by the company; and that's what I call doing a a thing modestly, and not meddling with matters one does not understand, like these jacobins and be d—ned to 'em, with their reforms and universal sufferings as they call it. Let every *mon* carry his own piece *whoam*, and I warrant me he'll have enough to do, as Lord G—— de W—— said at the last Church and King dinner, let every *mon* said he begin

by reforming himself. I hope, gentle-folks, you'll excuse my making but a short speech. I'm a bit *plashed*, and I know it. I've seen th' bottom of two bottles, in drinking success to th' Russians, and I'll join *onny mon* at another, i' th' same hearty cause, and that's what I call *jannock*, Mr. President."

This brilliant and sublime effusion was loudly and deservedly applauded; for it breathed sentiments exactly congenial to the society; and the language was plain and comprehensive to the *meanest* capacity. The next toast was "to the immortal memory of William Pitt," with the applause it always meets with from *loyal subjects*. After the shouting, roaring, stamping, and thumping had subsided, a person in an advanced state of intoxication roared out, "Come, I'll give you a volunteer, here's to the memory of Charles Fox." The hateful name was no sooner uttered, than "Turn him out! turn him out!" resounded from every quarter; but

the president, more moderate than the rest, observed, that as the gentleman had drank Pitt so loyally, he would protect him, on condition that he recalled his words, and gave some other toast. "Very well," replied the other, scarcely able to stand, "since you wo'nt have Fox, I'll give you *Pitt again*;"—and that moment discharged the contents of his stomach on the table.

Taking advantage of the confusion arising from this ill-timed accident, my friends talked of a removal; but could not immediately decide to what quarter we should steer our course. I mentioned the York, but that was overruled, as being too distant: "The King's Head," said Punwell, "is close by; there we shall be sure to find an empty room." To this Freeman replied, "Yes, let us remove—the King's Head shall settle our business—any change must be for the better." The president passing at that moment, and partially overhearing Free-

man's speech, stopped short, and with a ghastly look, roared out "Remove the king's head! — Gentlemen — Colonel — Major! — we have got a set of d—d rebellious jacobins amongst us, and nothing less will serve their turn than the head of our dear good king."

The Manchester delegates, foaming with loyalty, joined the outcry against us; and orator Thickset, with a sly look, as much as to say, "I'm the lad for catching 'em," exclaimed, "The case, *mester* president, is as plain as the nose o' my face. We are famons at Manches-ter for smelling out plots; because why? *Tuck'em up*, our *jacobin setter*, is as sharp as mustard; he's the *mon* for a 'size trial—he *lumps 'em*—off they go, *right* or *wrong*. Which, you know, is doing no more *nor* his duty; for though they are *proved innocent*, they *might* have been guilty, and its best, in these *parlous* times, to play a sure card. I wish they'd had him at Hud-dersfield t'other day, when that *owd ja-*

cobinical major was there! He'd ha' lump'd 'em all off to York castle. Oh! there's nothing like a good 'size trial to bring folk to their senses."

As soon as it was possible to edge in a word, Freeman endeavoured to elucidate in the following manner—"Mr. President, you have, give me leave to say, fallen into a trifling mistake." "Oh no! no mistake at all. Did you not say you'd remove the king's head, and that any change must be for the better?" "Why yes, sir: but you labour under a misconception." Misconception! don't talk to me, sir—don't talk to me. Your shuffling and cutting won't do.

Punwell now rose, and in the most decided manner insisted upon explaining what appeared suspicious. The chairman bowing assent, he continued: "Mr. President, I feel all *due* respect for your exalted situation and *splendid* talents! the honor you enjoy in presiding over this numerous and loyal body, scarcely ex-

cites my wonder, when I behold your *dignified* manner, and very proper conduct in the chair. (*Applause.*) The Society of the Shakenbrains, sir, ranks amongst its members, not only the body corporate, and the representatives of this opulent borough, but many other names who hold seats in the honorable house; and I am led to reverence you as head of a community which has long flourished in this kingdom, and spread its influence to regions the most remote. (*Applause.*) Perhaps, sir, you are not aware, to the full extent, of our obligations to your society; I will enumerate a few of the most prominent. To the Shakenbrains we are indebted for this *just, necessary, glorious, and successful war*. To the Shakenbrains we owe the unspeakable convenience arising from the circulation of *paper*; it is lighter and more portable than gold: besides, bank-notes set coiners and clippers at defiance, and thereby we have a right to conclude that many of his

majesty's liege subjects are saved from the gallows : to say nothing of the vast expence incurred by the importation of bullion—this is now saved, for a million of money may be made out of an old shirt. The national debt, too, which the disaffected are prone to disparage, the more enlightened financiers of the present day have proved to be one of our greatest *felicities* ; and this, I am proud to say, originated with the Shakenbrains. In short, were I to enumerate the blessings this country has to boast, and all bestowed through the medium of your learned body, it would take up too much of your *precious* and *valuable* time; suffice it to say oh ! happy and loyal Shakenbrains ! what have you not done for the good of your country. (*Reiterated applause.*) Without impeaching, in the smallest degree, your accute discernment, Mr. President, permit me to observe before this assemblage of *talent* and *intelligence*, that though it is the duty of every man to be on the

alert in the detection of those, who by *opposing* the *ministers*, shew their *disaffection* to our glorious constitution, and for the more easily obtaining information against whom, it is *hoped* the *inquisition* will soon be established in this country ; (*Applause.*)—yet, Sir, it is possible, our best, and most loyal intentions may be frustrated, by mistakes which sometimes occur when least expected; as a proof of this, give me leave to relate an anecdote.

“Not long ago, a report spread and easily gained credit, that a jacobinical meeting would take place on a barren moor, in the neighbourhood of a populous town in this county. Each loyal breast kindled with glorious ardour, the drums beat, the volunteers obeyed the signal, and colonels and captains flourished their broad swords, in hopes of obtaining laurels from the well fought field. The morning was foggy, and objects at a distance scarcely discernable. After marching nearly four miles, the word

“halt!” was proclaimed, and every soldier received orders to fix his bayonet, and to march on in silence, for the enemies firelocks, they said, were visible, though through the mist it was impossible to form a just idea of their strength. On they marched with burning zeal, and when the charge was given, each man buried his bayonet in——in what think you Mr. President? not in the breast of a jacobin—not in the breast of a disloyal rebel—but in the very bowels of a turf stack, which the neighbouring boors had piled up, placing a stick upon the top of each, to identify private property. Now here Sir, was an unfortunate mistake, and yet our loyal friends were not to blame; for at peep of day the colonel, major, adjutant, were mounted on as good looking horses as ever kept Manchester market, and in token of their intended prowess, with blazing broad swords cut six, as they passed the astonished inhabitants of each alarmed district. But now Sir, a diffi-

culty arose. How to get back with *credit* was the question? The loyal inhabitants would expect a *decent* return of the *killed* and *wounded*; besides a numerous string of *prisoners*, or there would be no *shouting* and *drinking*. A stout heart sir, is a good thing, and that I trust none of our friends lacked; but a good head is sometimes equally necessary. It so happened, that several of the country people had joined this expedition, not as licensed destroyers, but to lend a helping hand towards the extermination of the jacobins. But as no jacobins appeared, and as appearances must be kept up you know, what did the *discreet* colonel do, but seize the *countrymen* who had accompanied them, with their rusty knives, flails, pitchforks, &c. bind them together, and with colours flying, and drums beating, led them back in triumph as captived prisoners, and re-entered the town with shouts and acclamations; singing "See the conquering hero comes." What became of the poor fel-

lows, matters little ; whether they were *tried* at Lancaster, and *executed*, for you know, sir, it is *necessary* to hang *somebody* now and then, or whether they were only *imprisoned* for a short time, is quite immaterial ; the example in either case, you know sir, was highly necessary. And now I mean only to shew, that as the colonel in this instance was deceived, so it may happen that you, sir, with *equally good intentions*, may fall into error, and this I take upon me say is the fact. These two gentlemen and myself have a little business to settle at the king's head, and the latter words, ' that any change must be for the better,' were owing to your worthy friend discharging his stomach on the table. Such a circumstance is nothing when people are *used* to it ; but unfortunately my companion is more delicate than wise, and more irritable than either. That I may trespass no longer upon your leisure, I take my leave, with every good wish for the peace,

harmony, and continuance of the Shakenbrain Society."

The shouts and applauses put Punwell, who is a modest man, quite out of countenance ; at length order being restored, the president acknowledged his error, and had no doubt of our being *good men* and *true* ; whilst the Manchester delegates declared that " They had never heard so *loyal* a speech, since parson ——'s sermon at th' *owd* church, about turning *ploughshares* into *swords*."

" Thank you, Punwell," said Freeman, as we left the house, " for giving me a delicate stomach ; no other excuse could have been decently offered for the offensive words. How the stupid blockheads applauded what, if properly understood, would have sent you headlong down stairs ! and probably we should have shared the same fate for only being in your company. Do you know that cotton-headed colonel, and his oratorical friend, major Thickset ?" " No," replied Punwell, and

“ Yet in this instance ‘ignorance is bliss.’ I dare say, amongst their own set, they are called rational creatures; strut their hour upon change, and in the wheel of commerce form a principal spoke.”

“ Pray, my good friend,” said I, “ was the story related in your ingenious speech fact or fiction ?”

“ A mixture of both,” replied he, “ and the easiness with which the Shaken-brains were duped, convinces me more than ever that rogues and fools fill up two thirds of society ; the one may be called the spinal marrow of corruption, the other, the very back-bone of stupidity.”

“ O ! for a cottage on a common !” exclaimed Freeman, “ where, with my faithful dog, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field I might congregate, rather than pass my few hours of life with the off-scourings, and very hog-wash of humanity.”

We now entered the king’s head, and round a good fire, began the subject of

my preface; but so many arguments were adduced, and ably supported, pro and con, that I was in a greater perplexity than ever; and on my pillow, determined to return to Parkgate, and lay my fruitless enquiries, and the various scenes they had produced, before my reader: for mature reflexion convinced me that I had no claim upon Mr. Roscoe's time or attention; and that troubling him about a matter utterly unimportant to every human being except myself, was a liberty no sophistry could reconcile.

As I was leaving town, I called at the shop of my valuable friend Rush-ton, the bookseller; in order to inform him of the little success my endeavours had produced. He, smiling, replied, "You have been just as successful as I expected. If you are not yet sick of opinion, ask it of those who *dare* give it *honestly*; and do not apply to temporising drivellers; men, who like Polonius in the play, will say a whale, a camel, an eagle,

or any thing you please ;—fellows, who would slip through a shower of rain without receiving a single drop ;—whose souls are in their pockets ;—and, provided their own pitiful concerns are prosperous, care not if their neighbour, their country, the world were annihilated. Punwell and Freeman, are people of a different stamp. Such men are the advanced guard of human nature. Had you taken either of them alone, you would have received the best advice, delivered with candour and sincerity ; but fond of controversy, and generally agreeing to differ ; in the heat of argument they forgot your interest, as they would their own, rather than give up one point of debate, or confess themselves in the wrong. As I told you before, if your book has merit, it needs no preface, if none, a preface wont mend it. I travelled with your hero, Romney, through the three former volumes, with pleasure and satisfaction, and I dare say,

I am not singular in wishing for a continuation."

My friend Rushton is nearly deprived of one of nature's greatest blessings, sight; but providence has kindly supplied this deficiency, by enlarging the powers of his mind to a degree seldom attained by finite beings. Singular in his opinions, and exemplary in his conduct, he has maintained the cause of freedom, in the very teeth of tyranny, and boldly advocated the people, who would have overwhelmed him with opprobrium and insult. As a poet, he ranks with the first. To promote universal philanthropy and benevolence, peace and constitutional freedom amongst the human race, and humanity towards the brute creation are the general subjects of his muse, and every line is a letter to the heart, sealed by sincerity, and franked by truth. To sum up his character in one short sentence, Rushton is a man, "who dare be honest in the worst of times."

On my arrival at Parkgate, my generous pointer capered about my heels, as I entered the door of my plain, but peaceful dwelling; my domestic cat took her usual station on my shoulder; my wife turned up her round, good natured face, bestowing a benediction with the kiss of sincere affection, not lessened by six and thirty years acquaintance; her aged mother, fast approaching her eightieth year, shook my hand, whilst the tear of long tried friendship stood in her eye; in short, wife, mother, dog, cat, cow, pig, poultry, all, all were glad to see me, and a few hours of domestic bliss made ample amends for every former trouble.

I now set to work with redoubled ardour, and consoled myself with the hope that the additional volumes of the Itinerant, would be published in a few weeks, when one evening, by way of relaxation from study, as I sat smoking the pipe of peace, in the chimney corner of comfort, I was served with a writ at the suit of

Mr. ———, manager of the ——— theatre, for twenty-five pounds arrears of rent, for the said theatre, incurred some years before; indeed so long, and under such *oppressive* circumstances, that I was fool enough to conceive the natural energies of the human heart, might, perchance, overcome habit, and a *manager* for once possess the feelings of a *man*. Alas! I knew “little of Calista!” This *inflated king* of *shreds* and *patches*, sat supine on his imaginary throne, whilst I, seated by the side of a full-fed servant of the Sheriff, made the best of my way to Chester Castle; and wife, parent, dog, cat, cow, pig, poultry, “vanished, like the baseless fabric of a vision,” and all were left behind.

. Nurtured within the walls of this most ancient city, and schooled within its cloisters, for forty years past I had approached its venerable towers with feelings, arising from early prejudice, of a pleasing kind; but different, far different,

were those which now filled my throbbing breast ;—the greetings of a turnkey, and the walls of a prison, were sad substitutes for the cheering hand of friendship, and the welcome doors of hospitality.

'Tis said that 'liberty to an Englishman is much dearer than life.' As a theorist, I have always assented to this, but now, I experimentally know it to be a fact. Paint to thyself, reader, the awful change a few hours had made in the feelings of a mind, tremblingly alive to the most tender sensibility ! Think on the scene I had left, and that which now presented itself. The locks resounded—the massy iron doors creaked upon their hinges—whilst with much politeness, perhaps more than generally falls to the lot of turnkeys, I was ushered into a large stone apartment, in which sat seven of my fellow creatures ; who, like myself, were confined on suspicion of debt, and found guilty of being poor. “ Would you chuse to remain

in this wing of the castle?" said the turnkey.

"Why? where is the difference?"

"The opposite wing, sir, is appropriated to *poor* debtors."

"Poor! are we not all poor? Poverty brings us *here*, does it not?"

"Generally, sir. But on the other side they sleep fourteen in a room, on beds of straw."

"Straw! Great God! to what am I reserved? Ah! fool!" thought I, "hadst thou made hay when the sun shone, thou wouldst not now have been brought to straw!"

Finding I paused, "You are to understand," continued the man, "on this side those dwell who chuse to have a separate apartment, and a feather bed; for which they pay three shillings per week."

"Reasonable enough! In the name of all that's comfortable, let me have a feather bed."

I was now left to introduce myself to

my fellow prisoners ; and to endeavour to extract comfort from apparently, the most comfortless situation I had ever yet been placed in. However, having learnt something of the world, by long, and dear bought experience, I did not permit first appearances to stamp a final character, even on a prison, and in this I was right, as the sequel will shew.

I can compare the general room, with some justice, to the large, poverty-struck kitchen of a country public house ; not a chair to be seen, nor even a stool : an old crazy dresser held a few culinary utensils, of a wretched description, in value not worth more than ten shillings, for the use of which the debtors demand six shillings and four pence from each new comer, under the title of *garnish* ; by this payment he obtains the use of a gridiron, a frying-pan, a kettle, a few odd knives and forks, some broken plates, cups, and saucers, and a yellow tea-pot, with a blue cover : but these were better

than nothing, and since I had the means of making tea, I cared little about the equipage. I soon found, however, that this mode of collecting *garnish*, as they called it, was an imposition practised upon *novices*, to supply the more *veteran* prisoners with ale and tobacco.

At five o'clock the turnkey made his appearance, with a lantern, and a large bunch of tremendous keys; and when, from ocular demonstration, he found all the prisoners safe; the heavy door was locked, and all egress and regress at an end for that night.

Having obtained some small degree of exhilaration from my favourite beverage, tea, I promenaded the stone habitation for nearly two hours; sometimes pondering upon cause and effect; at others, listening to what passed at the fire side; where the merry joke, aided by ale and tobacco, seemed to say, that use would reconcile man even to a prison. "There's something new in this," thinks I to my-

self, “there’s variety in it; and to a man who studies character, and endeavours to paint human nature, much may be learnt even here; but the mind must be more composed than mine is at this moment, ere it can profit by it. The stupendous walls—the massy iron doors—the grated windows, and those placed at a height inaccessible—all, every thing I look at, reminds me of a bastille; and almost makes me ask whether I am not a criminal, incarcerated for some capital offence?”

To drive away reflection, I mended my pace, but it would not do; every turn presented objects that filled me with the same train of thought. “Now am I in jail,” said I mentally, “and what of that? many a better man has been in the same situation,” replied conscience. “True,” rejoined I, “many a better man has been hanged, but that would be no consolation to me at the gallows. But I shall soon be liberated:

when Mr. ——— finds I have no immediate means of paying the debt, he will accept some method of accommodation.”—So said equity. “Will he?” replied experience, “I have known him five and twenty years, and never heard his managerial character traduced by one generous action. Like Shylock in the play, ‘A pound of flesh is my due, and a pound of flesh I’ll have, or fie upon your laws.’” “He’s a hard-hearted, revengeful rascal!” exclaimed a tall man, who officiated as servant, for which each person who employed him paid eighteenpence per week. For be it known, in this place, let your circumstances be what they may, or your connexions and habits ever so respectable, if it does not happen, and it is possible, that there are no debtors poor enough to accept the office, each individual must wait upon himself; even were he dignified with a title. Sir Dilberry Diddle must peel potatoes—Sir Dilberry Diddle must fry the chops and

boil the kettle—Sir Dilberry must make his own bed, and empty his —— wash hand bason—nay, even make the fire and scour the floor.

“The tall man is right,” though I, attaching his ejaculation to my own thoughts, “he is hard-hearted.” My attention being thus attracted to the fire side conversation, I gave the halt to my quick paces, and enquired of whom Harry was speaking? When in a few words I became acquainted with a tale of distress which made my own troubles, by comparison, appear as nothing. The poor fellow had served thirteen years as serjeant in the militia; but at length procuring his discharge, retired to Stockport, his native place, and supported a wife and five children by weaving. During the two last winters the price of labour had so much decreased in value, that to procure the bare necessities of life, he incurred a debt of five pounds, with a flour dealer, and though he had traded with this man for years,

and honestly paid him weekly; the wretch, deaf to humanity, refused to take the money by instalments, although a relation offered to become his surety, but put him in the Court of Requests. By the fiat of that court, he was sentenced to imprisonment in Chester castle, clearing off a shilling of the debt every day of his confinement, and his wife and children deprived of every aid, were consigned to the workhouse. Now nothing but malice and revenge could have actuated this petty tradesman; for the debt ceased the moment the poor man was imprisoned; and to gratify those deadly passions, he tore a fellow creature from his family, to live fourteen weeks and two days upon bread and water, the gaol allowance, which must literally have been his only fare, but for the fortuitous circumstance of his being the poorest man in the prison, and consequently waiting upon those who could afford to purchase his services.

Harry's unvarnished tale brought me to reflection. Here was I, in deep despondence, walking at the rate of five miles an hour, and thinking myself the most unfortunate of beings; when in a moment my career was stopped, as if a voice had said, "cease thy ungrateful complaining! Have I not brought thee through difficulties innumerable, and canst thou so soon forget? Art thou afflicted more than others? Hear this man's story and blush at thy own folly!" And well indeed I might. An honest, industrious, labouring man, after serving his country, retires with a laudable wish to maintain his wife and little ones by manual labour; but the war, having nearly ruined trade and the country, this poor fellow, and thousands more, are driven to great distress—some to desperation.—A small debt is incurred, and a Badger, with feelings that would have disgraced a bear, throws him into jail, and his wife and children on the

parish. This lesson brought conviction to my mind, that however hard I might consider my fate, this poor man's was still harder. I had not served my country!—my wife was not reduced to such extremity!—I had no little ones to cry for bread!—I had no Badger to deal with! but a beast of prey, prowling in the more refined scenes of cruelty, had caught me in his toils, and grinned with ghastly savageness at my destruction.

The bell tolled nine ; and the turnkey, now accompanied by an assistant, made his second and final appearance for that night. Like rabbits in a warren, each crept to his hole. Mine was situated at the beginning of a lobby, twenty yards in length, guarded at the entrance by a heavy grated door, another of solid iron closed my cell, and made security doubly secure. The apartment was a *bed chamber* in the literal sense of the word, for neither chair, stool, nor table was allowed. To increase my misery, all the rooms

where a fire could be made were occupied; and the death-like coldness of a vaulted cell, where no material but stone met the touch, threw such a chilliness over my frame, on the coldest night I ever remember, that I threw myself, dressed as I was, under the thinly spread cloaths, and said to myself, "if I rise in the morning with the use of my limbs, it will be a blessing I do not expect."

What a change will not a few hours make in the fluctuating affairs of poor short sighted mortals! Last night I enjoyed every comfort I could wish, to-night they are fled, and so extreme is the reverse, that all my hopes centre in not being a cripple for the remainder of my life.

It seems as if in the conduct of this place, by abridging almost every comfort, and necessary article of furniture, it was meant to render misery more miserable. Why not have fire places in each apartment? Why not necessary furniture and culinary

utensils? But no—these are indulgencies a poor prisoner has no right to expect, and if habit has rendered them necessary, they may be bought or hired. Coals too, are to be purchased, or there will be no fire; a stick, if you are happy enough to bring one, supplies the place of a poker, and three or four bricks become an apology for a fender. Is then misfortune a crime, that punishment should be added to imprisonment? For surely privations like these are punishments, and to a person of decent habits very severe ones.

In fact, the situation of a person confined for debt, without money, is worse than the men confined for felony or murder; for *such*, there is a small provision, not to mention coals; but the only sustenance, allowed the unfortunate debtor, is bread and water. Having thus stated the unpleasant part of this prison, it is but fair to say all I can in its favor. The Governor of Chester Castle, is a rara

avis in the history of goal keepers ; for though it would be natural to conclude, and indeed is generally the case, that the mind, when habituated to scenes of misery and distress, becomes seared and hardened—the ear deaf to complaint—and the hand slow to redress—yet be it known, to the praise of Mr. Hudson, and may it prove a lesson to the hard-hearted part of his fraternity, that his conduct is an exact contradiction to this general rule. To every feeling of humanity he is tremblingly alive—the oppressed never appeal to him in vain—his ear is the passage to his heart—and his hand obeys its dictates, by administering every comfort, and indeed more than the rules of the prison allow; and whatsoever privations the debtors are doomed to undergo, such are the regulations, with which he has nothing to do.

Like master, like man. The turnkey—miserable office ! possesses a suavity of manners far above his situation, and such as one would not expect from a person,

long used to the clank of fetters, and the locking up of dungeons, in which the desponding criminal, counts the melancholy minutes that fill up the space previous to execution.

Having thus stated a few facts, I shall return to my stone chamber, and the miseries which attended it.

I did not pass a sleepless night, although, having no curtains, the intense cold attacked my face like pins and needles; and a noise, (for all the roofs being of arched stone, convey sounds quick upon the ear of the most remote) as if from persons cleaning; with ever and anon, the bang of an iron door below, gave me an idea that when the prisoners were in bed, the servants came to scrub the floors, &c. This, however, was not the case; for I learnt from the turnkey, that after nine o'clock he comes no more, and no person living could gain entrance without his knowledge. At half past seven in the morning, though scarcely

light, the doors were opened, and each person at liberty to take advantage of it. I rose, shook myself, stretched out my limbs, and fervently thanked God that they were still vigorous and elastic. After the salutations of the morning, the party colored tea pot, and delf appendages were again brought forward, and never did I eat a heartier breakfast. Between the two wings of the castle appropriated for debtors, is a handsome court, neatly laid out as a flower garden, which affords a pleasant walk to those who have not the choice of any other. In this place I paced many a mile, sometimes stopping to listen—not to the sweet notes of the lark, the linnet, or the blackbird, but to the clanking of fetters from the wards below; whilst looking around, and admiring the extent, strength, and beauties of my cage, I exclaimed, How stupendous! how magnificent! how grand this pile appears at a distance!—but alas! the cry of those im-

mured within its walls, is like Stern's Starling, "I can't get out!"

The circumstance of a public character being confined in the castle for debt, could not long be concealed; nor did I wish it. The only means of emancipation I knew must arise from friendship, and secresy was not the way to obtain it. The newspapers feelingly reported the event, and many of my old acquaintance, with some new ones, flocked down to see me. Amongst the latter, a gentleman whose fortune, connexions, family, and professional celebrity place him high in public estimation, called at the castle on hearing of my disaster; and offered his services with that pleasant ease which stamps the gentleman, and takes from the obliged party all painful sense of obligation. Doctor F—— C—— has a mode, a manner of bestowing kindness, even superior to the action itself; a mode and manner rarely understood, and still more rarely practised. Were I to indulge the

feelings of my heart, and say all I think of this truly exalted character, it would rather offend than please; inasmuch as real benevolence seeks not public applause, but finds its highest gratification in self-approval.

Would I had the pen of a ready writer, to paint my sense of gratitude to *all* my Chester friends! They came—they sent—they spoke the words of sympathy; but my old schoolmaster, the Rev. T——C——, came not—neither did he send. The son of his old friend was in prison, and an opportunity offered whereby he might make some return for *former favours*—but no! age had blunted the edge of memory, and avarice sealed up the avenues to his heart. Not so with *all* that wear black. The Rev. Mr. L——s, a dissenting minister, of no mean celebrity in the preaching world; and who practises that benevolence and charity he publicly recommends; thought it not beneath the dignity of his cloth to

visit and add to the comforts of one who stood in need of, and, I hope the good Samaritan thought,—*merited* consolation. Happy effects of true Christian principles! Would they were more generally acted upon!

To mention more names, unless I could include all my benefactors, and that would spin my narrative to a tiresome length, would shew an undue partiality; and yet I cannot avoid referring to one more; whose humble station, confined means, and numerous claims upon his industry—claims of a near and tender kind, gave his attentions to me a value incalculable; did honor to his feelings as a man; and reflect credit on the methodist persuasion, of which he is a meek and sincere disciple. Early in life, Hankey the hair dresser, for of that worthy man I speak; possessing a lively disposition, an excellent voice, an open heart, and convivial propensities, nearly fell a sacrifice to the charms of society. His

hours were late, his business neglected, his health impaired, and doubtless his encreasing family would soon have felt the effects of a broken constitution, and embarrassed circumstances; but possessing a heart susceptible of acute feeling, the death of a favorite child made a deep impression on his mind; under that impression, he attended by chance the preaching of the methodists, became a convert, and from that moment to the present, involving many years, a more loving husband, affectionate father, sincere friend, and industrious and moral character does not exist. His shop and fire side now occupy the whole of his time, save that spent in devotion; his customers and his family are his only companions, and to the calls of humanity his mite is never wanting.

“And is all this praise bestowed upon a maker of wigs?” methinks I hear my high minded readers exclaim, “Eulogiums on so obscure an individual——” It is

my wish to point out merit, however obscure, and to value it wherever found. Those silly notions, entertained by weak minds, that rank and riches *add* lustre to virtue, I pronounce fallacious; virtue may *add* lustre to the rich and the titled, but can derive none, and many a worldly prosperous man in this ancient city, may blush to see himself out done in charity, philanthropy, and benevolence, by *poor Hankey the barber.*

The succeeding day passed on as pleasantly, as the administering comforts of friendship could make it, and at nine o'clock, we were as usual locked in our stone chambers. The night was equally cold, and again I slept in my cloaths; but at three o'clock, I was awakened by a violent blow, apparently on the iron door of my cell: ere I had time to reflect on the cause, the same effect was produced, only louder than before, and resounded through the arched gallery like the explosion of a gun. "'Tis very

odd," thought I, as I turned upon my pillow, "the first alarm might have passed for a dream, but no image of fancy could produce the second." Nothing, however, happening further to disturb me, I slept peaceably till the heavy key turned in the ponderous door, and opened a way to the more social parts of the castle. At breakfast I mentioned the matter to my comrades, and asked them what occasioned the noise? One shook his head—another looked serious—but a third, with an appearance of horror exclaimed, "is she come again?"

"Who come?" said I.

"Oh nothing," replied he, "these noises are familiar to us, and if you stay long in the castle, you'll hear and see strange things."

"Of what nature? How occasioned?"

"Heaven knows," answered the first speaker, who I found was an attorney, "sometimes we are quiet a week or two together, the last fortnight for instance,

but if *Old Bet* be come again, we may expect sleepless nights."

Old Bet, I was informed—but why, or wherefore, no one could tell—was the name given to this common disturber, who committed strange pranks, in the opposite wing; such as illuminating the midnight darkness with vivid flashes of light, which made the most minute objects visible, upsetting the beds, and throwing their owners into the middle of the floor, &c. These accounts certainly appeared strange. Though I had not the smallest faith in supernatural agency, I visited the other wing as soon as breakfast was over, to hear what account the inhabitants would give of their nocturnal disturbances; and found every thing I had before heard more than corroborated. Three of them had been thrown out of bed only the preceeding night, which they were ready to attest on oath; and a poor simple methodist said, "That he had prepared a stick to attack the assail-

ant, but when he found it was something permitted by the Lord, he thought it his duty to submit.”

These occurrences, and others of a like nature, served for conversation during the greatest part of the day; and, to my surprise, I found that most of my companions, and particularly the attorney, who was a shrewd sensible fellow, concurred in believing the effect was produced by more than mortal means. At this I laughed; for superstitious fears had long since been eradicated from my mind; nay, often, in the most dreary situations, I have wished, that if supernatural appearances were permitted, I might then and there have ocular demonstration; as an additional proof of a future existence. It cannot then be supposed that I became an easy sacrifice to the fear of ghosts; although, with some persons, what I am going to relate may lay me open to a surmise of that kind.

There was a room at the end of a long

lobby, on the ground floor, occupied by a man and his wife ; luckily she returned home on this day, and I obtained permission to have my bed removed into this room. The fire was a most desirable thing, and I hugged myself with the prospect of once more undressing, and enjoying the luxury of a comfortable bed.

At ten o'clock I retired to rest, leaving my companion engaged with a book he seemed deeply intent upon. The blaze of a good fire threw such a cheerful light into the vaulted room, and my bed felt so warm and snug, that I almost forgot I was a prisoner. The cell was the facsimile of the one I before occupied, and could a few lighted coals make all this difference? No, reader!—not all! I had now a comrade, and if the noises of the preceding night should return, there was comfort in the thought that I should have some one to look to—a fellow being to consult on the probable and the possible.

For the probability of a trick, however accomplished, took strong possession of my mind; and the possibility of superhuman agency being employed to frighten and alarm poor weak mortals was too contemptible to be cherished for a moment. With these reflexions I fell asleep. About the “witching time of night, when church yards yawn,” I was wakened from an uneasy slumber, by the great clock striking three. All was dark—the night perfectly calm—and I could plainly hear a noise, resembling an attempt to pick the lock of the door. Now as no human creature slept in this lobby except ourselves; or if they had, could have left their cells, I confess I began to be a little staggered.

This kind of pick-lock noise was succeeded by a scraping, as if some instrument had been rubbed several times up and down the door. When this ceased, I exclaimed, “Who’s there?”—no answer, but a blow, like the report of gun,

repeated nine times upon the iron portal, made the whole wing of the prison re-echo with its violence.

Man may boast of his courage in the hour of safety—we are all heroes by the fire-side—but the strongest mind never yet felt pleasantly in the moment of danger, real or imaginary. My reason having failed in accounting for these occurrences, I found an agitation arising in my mind, that all my boasted philosophy could not conquer; and as I groped my way towards the door, my blood quickened its circulation, betokening a fear of something I could not describe—conceive—or believe the existence of. As I passed my comrades bed he exclaimed, “I wish I was out of this infernal place!” “So do I too,” thought I. “These noises are enough to appal the devil!” he continued. “Did you hear the ticking, and the scraping which preceded the blows?” enquired I. “To be sure I did. ’Tis impossible to sleep when Old

Bet takes her rambles." "Then you really believe in the agency of this visionary being, and that the sounds we have just heard were produced by no human hand? Before he could reply, and as I was stepping into bed, five more blows of equal force echoed on the iron door, and, for the moment, made me a convert to the generally received opinion, that something more than natural produced them.

When we assembled in the morning, each person complained of a sleepless night; the disturbance had been general, and Old Bet was universally anathemized. One old man, who possessed a portion of low humour, informed us in a broad dialect; that he heard the noises a considerable time before they approached his room; But when Bet *coom* to my *dur*," he continued, "I said to her; go thy way, *owd wench*, go thy way, we *dunna* want thee here; and if you'll believe me, *hoo wur* very quiet at after."

Accidentally meeting Mr. Hudson during my morning promenade, I made him fully acquainted with the occurrences of each night, and asked to what cause the noises might be attributed. At first he smiled, and said it was a trick; but before I had finished, surprise and vexation were visible on his brow. "We must put an end to this," he replied; and calling the turnkey, I accompanied them into every apartment; where boxes and beds underwent a general search; but nothing was found that could lead to any discovery. Still the governor persevered in denominating it a trick, a piece of fun practised upon all new comers. This being very seriously denied, he firmly said, "To convince me, and clear yourselves, I'll send for a magistrate, and have each man put to his oath." This was readily agreed to by many; but some four or five, amongst whom was the bookseller, my comrade, positively refused to take the oath. "Then you are

guilty," said I, and a new light flashed upon my mind.

Throughout the day, I pondered on the possibility of creating such alarming sounds; and the result of my cogitation was, that if produced by human means, and of that I never seriously doubted; the bookseller must be the operator, and this night I determined to watch him narrowly. For that purpose, I ordered Harry, as the lock up hour approached, to make a fire large enough to burn all night; and after taking a pint of wine, with which I had been liberally supplied by the Rev. Mr. L——s, I retired once more to my bed.

My comrade, as on the former night, was deeply engaged with a book till twelve o'clock, when he followed my example; though not before he had thrown ashes on the fire, under a pretence that the light would keep him awake. The clock struck one, and all was still and quiet. Another hour elapsed—it struck

two—and wearied out with watching, I turned my face to the wall, and was fast sinking into forgetfulness, when the ticking and scratching commenced. I started round, and at that moment a noise as of a rushing wind dashed my empty wine bottle on the floor, and shivered it into a thousand pieces.

The fire was not extinguished, though it emitted too feeble a light to discern objects. To remedy this I jumped out of bed, and with my wooden poker raised a flame. All was now still, the ticking and scratching had ceased, but as I stood by the door, near which was the head of the bookseller's bed, it first struck me that by extending his hand, he might cause both the noises. This I taxed him with, but, "no! he could not reach the door." Neither could he, and I was as far to seek as ever; but looking under his bed and about it, I discovered that the head as well as the feet, was made of Iron, and by an instrument of any kind, the

small noises could be produced, and the loud ones by a machine large enough and with a handle sufficiently long to reach the door, "Oh! I have caught you," said I "you may now thunder and tick and scratch without causing me another wakeful moment."

The bookseller had been rather sulky ever since the morning's examination; and to my present accusation made no reply, pretending to be overpowered with sleep; which perhaps was really the case for there were no more disturbances during the night; the following day he left the castle, and me to the quiet possession of my apartment.

In the morning I was honored by a visit from Doctor F—— C——, with the pleasing intelligence, that having consulted his friends, it was the general opinion, a benefit in the Theatre would relieve me from my present difficulties; naming "A cure for the heart ache," and "The prisoner at large," as the play and

farce fixed upon ; and that he would deposit an hundred pounds in the governor's hands, that I might be at liberty to perform. This singular and unprecedented kindness, from a gentlemen of the very first estimation in Chester, was both grateful to my heart and highly flattering ; I felt it to its utmost extent, but could find no words adequate to my feelings.

The good doctor had scarcely left the prison, when the Rev. Mr. L——s entered, whose warm breast led him to enquire “what *had* been done, or *could* be done to serve me?” When I mentioned the benefit, “that will do,” he replied, “and though I am not in habits of addressing managers, on an occasion like this, I will make personal application. About an hour afterwards, I received a note from the worthy divine, saying, that every thing was fixed, and my benefit would take place in a few days.

If variety be pleasing, I have at least

had my full share of pleasure, for almost as regularly as the day follows the night, novel circumstances, and strange occurrences have arisen throughout the whole of my eventful life.

The dealer in books had scarcely left the castle an hour, ere I heard, as I sat writing in my stone chamber, the turn-key very politely conducting some person down the lobby, who by his gait appeared to be lame. "This way, Sir," said Hurst, "there's only one gentleman in the room, and two excellent beds, with a good fire." "That's lucky, boy;" replied a hoarse voice, "give an old soldier a hearty comrade, a good fire side, a pipe, and a glass of grog and he's a generalissimo."

"We don't allow grog here, Sir."

"The d——l you dont!"

"No Sir, its against the rules of the castle." Here was a grand stop, and a pause. A negative to the grog seemed a thunderbolt; but at length again pro-

ceeding slowly, "why where the h—ll did *you* come from?" continued the stranger, "no grog! I've travelled through east, west, north, and south, you understand me, for the last fifty years, and never heard of such a thing. No grog!"

As he uttered the last words, they entered my apartment, and—but how shall I describe the singular figure? Fancy to thyself, reader the face of a veteran warrior, in which was plainly written, I love my country—I love my friend—and I love my bottle. His silver locks were inclosed in a small cue, with a close curl on each side the head, and on the top of his high forehead, stood a formal toupee. He wore a blue top coat, with yellow buttons somewhat the worse for wear. One hand held a hat, which had formerly, no doubt, borne the military cock, but fashioned and formed by economical scissars, was now a better emblem of a barber's basin, than the round hat

it was meant to represent. His other hand embraced a stick, which, by the halt in his gait, was intended to support the right leg; his person was of the middle size, stout and healthy; although his ruby nose betrayed symptoms of a hot liver, that often required the cooling drops of comfort to assuage its fever.

With the air of a perfect gentleman, he made his bow, and thus addressed me, "You see before you, Sir, an old soldier properly speaking, who after marching and counter-marching, for fifty years, in defence of his country, is at length marched into a jail,—and there's honor for you.

The turnkey retiring, the veteran seated himself on a coarse bench, for chairs we had none, and after warming and rubbing his hands, took from his pocket a tobacco box and a portable dutch pipe, whilst, as he leisurely filled, lighted, and smoked, we proceeded, with

short intervals for puffing, in the following singular dialogue.

“Warm work on the continent, Sir.”

“Yes Sir.”

“Won’t you take a whiff? Real Canastre.”

“Sir, I thank you.”

“I’ll tell you what, Sir—there’s much comfort in a pipe and a glass of——no! there’s no grog permitted in these barracks. Properly speaking, Sir, if I had such fellows under my command, I’d cashier them for breach of duty, you understand me; what’s a horse without his feed, or a soldier without his grog? The one can’t work, the other can’t fight.”

“But Sir, I have a respectable substitute. Here’s a bottle of excellent port.” As I placed the wine on the table, I observed his eyes sparkle, nay, methought even his nose changed its complexion. “Why aye! continued he, “properly speaking, good wine is grog’s elder bro-

ther, I must confess. It looks charmingly in the glass, and for the bottle we'll soon make a marine officer of him; you understand me, Sir, I mean we'll soon empty it, with your good leave. Pray do they allow wine for the mess here?"

"No Sir! This was a present. We get nothing here but what the pocket will supply, except excellent bread, and good water."

The man who supplied the prison with ale being at the gate, Harry came to know "how much I chose for the evening;" none being admitted after four o'clock. "You may take a quart," replied I. The servant was retiring, when the stranger, rising from his chair, and laying down his pipe, with stentorian voice roared out "here you Orderly!" then taking a couple of shillings out of his pocket, he added, "bring three quarts, you understand me." Harry hesitated, "to the right about—march!" and away went the poor fellow, who hav-

ing been a sergeant in the militia, as I before observed, knew all the technical terms, and stretched himself out, as though he had been on parade.

“Don’t you think you have been too bountiful in your order, captain?” said I, “we shall never get through so much malt liquor.” “I’ll tell you what, Sir, you seem to know little of the military world. When you have been, properly speaking, in the East Indies, in America, and in Egypt,—you understand me, Sir—rough and smooth, wet and dry, why then you’ll know something. In the East, the scorching heat blistered my throat, and I was obliged to wash it continually to keep the passage open.—The chilling cold of an American winter forced me to wash it, lest it should be frozen up. And in Egypt, if I had not kept it well washed, the sands would have choaked me. So with washing here, and washing there, I have got into a custom,—you understand me—and custom is second nature.

Come, Sir, here's the King : God bless him !”

There was something extremely interesting in this old soldier ; and though I neither knew his name nor rank, I set him down in my mind's common place book as a gentleman ; who from variety of company, and the hardships he had undergone in his military capacity, had acquired habits of dissipation, now confirmed into custom, and never to be eradicated.

At this moment Harry returned. “ Sir,” said he, putting his hand to his head, in a true soldier-like manner, “ the turnkey won't permit three quarts; 'tistoo much.— I think so too.”

“ You think?—and who the d—l told you to think? Who ever heard of a soldier thinking? If I choose to have twenty quarts, properly speaking, I pay for 'em—you understand me—what's that to any body?” “ True, sir,” said Harry, with a half smile, “ but here each person

is only allowed one quart, lest we should get drunk and be unfit for *duty*.

These words had an instantaneous effect upon the old officer; they bore a military sound; he stumped up to the poor fellow; "Give me your hand, my lad," said he, "you have worn the King's livery—properly speaking, hey? you understand me?" "Yes, your honor. I was a serjeant thirteen years. But what must I do about the ale? the man will be gone."

"One quart each the allowance, hey? Then bring three, and there will be one for the serjeant." Harry was going to reply, but—"to the right-about, march," sent him off as stiff as a ramrod.

At nine o'clock, when the turnkey took his rounds, the old gentleman, hearing the distant doors and locks of the different wards echo through this immense building, cried out, "What's that noise? is there mutiny in the garrison? where's the sentinel?"

“ He’ll be here presently,” I replied, and instantly Hurst and his assistant made their appearance, with each a lanthorn.

The veteran laid down his pipe, and, rising precipitately, grasped his stick in token of self-defence. But the turnkey not observing him, with his usual civility, bade us good night! and instantly the iron portal closed with a dismal vibration. The hollow sound of the door, which he had not before observed, and the idea of being locked up, had a visible effect on the stranger’s mind; he hobbled towards it, examined all around, looked at the high barred windows, and, after contemplating the strength of the place, twirled his stick about, put on his little hat, and began to sing with great vehemence “ Oh what a charming thing’s a battle.”

I really pitied him. Since he came into prison this was the first symptom of feeling he had shewn; and wishing to direct his thoughts into another channel, I observed, “ So then, you are fond of

fighting, Captain?—I presume I may address you by that title.”

“You are right, Sir; properly speaking, I am a Captain, I have long been a Captain, and I shall remain a Captain till I deliver up my commission to Captain Death.” The latter part of the sentence was uttered with a sigh, and to drive away despondence, I brought out the ale, charged my pipe, and filling a glass, said, “Come, Sir, here’s the army; and may our brave soldiers, after protecting their country, be rewarded with something better than the inside of a prison.”

This was touching a tender string; and when I found the effect it had upon his feelings, I blushed at my own imprudence, and would have eaten my words had that been possible. He seized my hand with eagerness, and whilst the glistening tear stood in his eye, replied, “I know you speak from a generous motive, and properly speaking you are right, you understand me; but in my case my coun-

try is not to blame. I have been wronged by a villain, of money that would have purchased a majority, you understand me; and having been driven from my winter quarters, where I messed in company with my wife and daughter: by the enemies foragers, I am placed in these barracks for a short time—you understand me. I shall send a flag of truce tomorrow into the enemy's camp, and I dare say, properly speaking, a treaty of peace will take place; because why? I've got the stuff in my pocket—you understand me—but as I did not choose to capitulate on their terms, they seized my tent and baggage, and sent me here, by way of drill I suppose. I'll tell you what, sir," continued he, as he replenished his pipe, "my name is Jack Meadows, captain and adjutant in a regiment of foot; for years, wet and dry, rough and smooth, I served as lieutenant of cavalry; was wounded in our memorable retreat from Dunkirk; should have been frozen

to death in Holland, if it had not been for grog; went to the Indies with a regiment of fine blooming lads; returned with only myself and a serjeant—you understand me—all gone to fight the enemy in the other world. In short, sir, after serving my country fifty years, wet and dry, rough and smooth, I was, properly speaking, comfortably settled in this county, when an acquaintance—a cotton-headed thief—a fellow with spinning jennies, and all kinds of gimcracks—one of your bill-drawing swindlers, common robbers, that ought to be tied up to the halberts, persuaded me, like a d—d fool, you understand me, to lend my name to his infernal bills. But I was deceived sir; the scoundrel lived in such a style—a sideboard of plate—a regiment of lackies in livery; then his immense factory, with a battalion of naked, half-starved twisters and twiners.—I'll tell you what, sir, to make short of the story—for I hate to talk about it—the name of an old soldier

procured for a thick-headed fellow, who had not an idea beyond the raw material—bills down—two months, and two months—credit for ten thousand pounds, most of which I had to pay ; for he, according to the plundering rules of trade, smashed all to pieces, you understand me, gave his own bills for two shillings in the pound, and now twists and twines again. Had my money gone in rescuing a poor soldier or sailor ; or, properly speaking, any honest, clever fellow in distress—wet or dry, rough or smooth—you understand me—I should have had nothing to complain of ; but to embarrass myself for a silly-pated dolt, properly speaking, who knows no more of the army than a suttler—you understand me—for when I entered into any of my interesting accounts of military manœuvres, or my travels abroad, he interrupted me with observations on the price of cotton in that country, or talked about fourteen-horse power, and the advantages of steam engines. I

say, sir, to be duped by such drivellers as this—properly speaking—is a stigma on my understanding; and instead of these barracks, I should have been sent to a mad-house—you understand me.—and now sir, having brought my story to a conclusion, let me advise you to have nothing to do with bills; you'll be ruined, if you do."

"And I shall be ruined if I do not, sir," replied I, thinking by a silly pun to awaken a less painful strain of thinking. "In a few days I shall circulate perhaps two thousand."

"Two thousand!" he exclaimed in great astonishment, "but your name is not to them?—you understand me."

"Yes, but it is."

"Perhaps then you are secured by others of consequence and property."

"O yes! there's Sir Hubert Stanley, and Mr. Vortex, the rich nabob."

"Nay then there's no fear, properly speaking, you are as safe as the bank."

“ I have led you into an error, my good sir. My bills are only play-bills.” I then made known my profession, the cause of my imprisonment, and the probability there appeared of a speedy emancipation. At the conclusion of my narrative, he replied, “ And this treatment you have received from a brother actor?”

“ An actor,” I answered, “ but no brother ; I disclaim all ties of consanguinity.”

“ Very good. And this pitiful being, properly speaking, commands the troop, eh ? I wish he was here to have his grog stopped for a month or two, you understand me.”

The grog still stuck in his throat, but the ale found an easy passage ; and as he observed me preparing for bed, asked if I could not spare another half hour to an old soldier ? This I informed him was my usual time, but though in bed, I should be glad to join in his pleasant conversation. And indeed he gave me

plenty of it. First he took me to the East, where he fought his battles over with such energy, that frequently, in the heat of action, his stick would be plunged between the bars of the grate, and the hot coals bestrew the floor. After mowing down the poor unoffending Hindoos like chaff before the wind, he would stop to moralize. "Poor d—ls! they live on milk and rice, and know more of praying than fighting! I pitied them, but we must do our duty you know, wet or dry, rough or smooth. I consider myself, properly speaking, an instrument; a cannon for instance; fire I must, and if the engineer points me wrong, it's none of my fault, you understand me. Then the monopoly of rice, by which thousands of these harmless people were starved to death! I'll tell you what sir, properly speaking, there's a d—d deal of iniquity in the world—you understand me."

As I did not answer, for indeed the

sufferings of the inoffensive Hindoos had brought on a train of thinking not much to the credit of my country; "I am afraid I disturb you," continued the captain, "and as the ale is out, I may as well follow your example." But the thing was sooner said than done: the task of undressing and getting into bed was more than the ebriated adjutant could accomplish, and my offers of service were not only rejected, but treated as insult. At length, with an incoherent speech, interlarded with "properly speaking—I said to the major—Major said I—You understand me—Don't stop the grog—Because you see, wet or dry, rough or smooth—Grog, you know, major, is—properly speaking"—he dropped asleep in his chair; when placing the table in a situation to prevent his falling into the fire, I fell into a sound slumber, from which I awoke not, for Bet had vanished with the Bookseller, until the turn-key unlocked the door. This noise also

aroused the captain; whose immediate recollection not being able to ascertain the precise state of things, he started up, and flourishing his stick, with strong emphasis exclaimed "down with 'em rank and file, down with 'em lads." But soon recovering himself, continued "Eh? what! have I been sleeping on my arms all night? Well, it can't be helped, an old soldier must sometimes take his turn upon guard.

Whilst Harry, or orderly, for by that appellation he was now distinguished, cleaned the apartment and prepared breakfast, Capt. Meadows and I breathed a pure and bracing air in the court; and being Sunday, I informed him we should all be expected to attend the chapel.— "Oh! by all means," he replied, "when the drum beats, you understand me, we'll muster in the chaplain's tent. Properly speaking, it's what I'm accustomed to; it sets a good example to the subalterns; and a soldier fights never the worse for saying his prayers."

Our attendant, foreseeing he had a generous commander to deal with, skipped about like a fogle-man. Every thing was said in military language—every thing done with military expedition—and each advance or retreat made with a military salute. In short, he humoured the prejudices of the old adjutant, and the adjutant in return, each day ordered an extra quart of ale for the serjeant.

At two o'clock the bell rung, and persons of all descriptions, from the debtor to the murderer, made their way through various passages to the chapel. A regular clergyman officiated ; one of the felons is allowed some trifling privilege for acting as clerk ; and what is rather remarkable, the unfortunate man who now fills the office, could not read at all when he entered the prison, but from instruction and application, now goes through the ceremony quite as well as is necessary. The bottom of the chapel is divided into several compartments, ap-

appropriated for felons of various descriptions, male and female. The gallery is occupied by debtors, with the exception of one division; a part of which was covered with a curtain, that served to conceal from our view a female, under sentence of death for a crime, the most barbarous, bloody, and inhuman that the annals of our country can produce. As the circumstances attending the horrid murder for which this miserable woman will justly suffer, are not generally known, I shall briefly relate them.

Edith Morrey was the wife of George Morrey, a respectable farmer at Hankelow in Cheshire. For several years they lived in perfect harmony and affection, at least on his side; for it is difficult to suppose a mind so depraved as her's could ever have been tenderly attached, although several children were seeming proofs of sincere regard. No neglect of family—no habits of ebriety, nor moroseness of temper that might lead to domes-

tic misery, were brought forward as a mitigation of her crime ; nay, on the very evening when the shocking murder was committed, a witness states, they were fondling, as if equally impelled by conjugal affection.

In the metropolis, we read of monstrous crimes perpetrated by wretches hatched in the very hot-bed of iniquity, and inured to it from their cradles ; from such a soil 'tis natural to expect such fruit ; but in a peaceful village, where industry, temperance, and good example lead the mind from evil, it is marvellous to find a being capable of such an atrocious murder.

“ Murder most foul, as in the best it is,
But this most foul, bloody, and unnatural.”

John Lomas, aged twenty, had lived with Morrey some time in the capacity of a servant, attending the concerns of the farm ; and, being a lad of comely appearance, found favor in the sight of Edith ; nor had the duties of a wife or

mother power to prevent her shewing it in a way none but an idiot could have misconstrued. In fine, the innocence of Lomas, as well as her own chastity became the sacrifice of ungoverned appetite. But as one step of iniquity leads to another, Edith planned further schemes of uncontrolled enjoyment; some hellish Demon whispered in her ear, that her husband's destruction would alone ensure her future happiness! The mind once made up to some intended enterprise, busy imagination goes to work about the means, and the same evil genius that first promoted lust, now prompted murder! Dreadful contemplation! may the following blood stained picture prove a check to the indulgence of unbridled passions "which burn but to destroy." Had this wretched woman wrought her own destruction only, our regret would have been comparatively trifling; but alas! her wicked, artful, wanton wiles, working upon the simplicity of an uninformed

mind, proved the means of cutting down an early plant, that might otherwise have bloomed and faded in the field of virtue.

We may naturally suppose, that a simple youth, unstudied in the way of vice, would shrink from the first surmise of murder ; and if we may judge from his repugnance to commit it, even to the last, the woman Edith must have had much to encounter, ere she could sear a conscience, which, spite of all her arts, was never entirely callous.

Morrey was a man of some property. The idea of possessing this—to be master not only of the farm, but lawful husband to his mistress—to hold a place in society his most sanguine ideas could never have aspired to ; were allurements too great ; implements too strong in the hands of wickedness—in a word, they beat down the barriers of a weak mind, and in a fatal moment he consented to the bloody deed.

On the 11th of April, 1812—beneath

the sanction of the night—the dreadful purpose fixed—Morrey, on his return from a neighbouring village, sat by Edith, unsuspecting of his fate; loving, and, as he thought, beloved—cherishing his children, and probably looking forward to the coming morn, again to work for their support.—But alas! the morning never came—the sun had set for ever—and in blissful ignorance he threw himself on his bed, confident of safety. Edith had wrung from the lad his slow consent to do the accursed deed; but in order to “screw his courage to the sticking place,” had given him money to spend in regale, during his master’s absence; and he lay down upon his bed without undressing, a short time previous to Morrey’s return; and probably, overcome by intoxication, was fast asleep when Edith went to tell him all was prepared: “My husband sleeps,” she said, “the axe is ready, and now’s the time to kill him.” Heaven and earth! can such things be? Is it possi-

ble, for female depravity to arrive at such a pitch of wickedness? Were not the fact authenticated beyond all possibility of doubt, we should say “indeed it is *impossible!*”

Sleep having in some measure brought Lomas to his senses, and conscience beating hard against his breast, he refused to obey her mandate; as though he had said, “Oh mistress! do not ask me—my master was ever kind—why should I kill him? I cannot, *will* not go.” Thus repulsed she left him; but ere much time elapsed again returned, and by menaces, soothing, and caresses, the reluctant youth was compelled to act a deed he shuddered but to think of. In vain he reasoned on the danger of discovery, and forfeiture of life. “For these things” said the hellish syren, “I have provided. The business once accomplished, you must return to your room, the servant shall be sent to call you, who, on oath, will prove she found you sleeping in your bed.”

Then placing an axe in his hand, she again encouraged him : but still he hesitated—" my master may awake before I reach the bed." " I will go first," replied Edith, " and if he sleeps, holding up my hand shall be the signal for your approach." Morrey slept ! The signal was given, again—and again—and yet he came not. At length, what soothing could not accomplish, menaces effected. The affrighted instrument of Edith's cruelty and lust, entered the fatal chamber, and, dreadful to relate ! the *wife*, the abandoned *wife*, held the candle—mark reader—*held the candle* whilst Lomas, with an enormous axe planted three dreadful blows on her sleeping, unsuspecting, *husband's head* !

It would be well, for the credit of human nature, were it possible to bury in oblivion this dreadful detail ; for surely no climate, no country, though ever so barbarous, can produce its parallel !

The blows would probably have been

continued while any spark of life remained, had not the poor victim's groans roused the servant girl who slept in an adjoining room. Edith hearing a noise, extinguished the candle, whilst Lomas precipitately left the place. The girl it appears was endeavouring to escape through the window, for both the sleeping rooms were on the ground floor; but was pulled back by her mistress, with information that *murderers* were in the house, and to keep quiet in her chamber. This done, she led the horrified youth again to the bed, where more blows were given at random in the dark; some of which took place, and conceiving the deed of blood accomplished, both retired into the kitchen.—The groans of poor Morrey however pursued them! He still lingered! And to make all sure, Edith produced a razor, insisting with threats, that he should return and cut his master's throat. Fear and horror having deprived the lad of almost every sense, he stood motionless;

until the fiend-like tempter pushing him into the room, went herself to the servant girl's chamber, ordering her to dress herself and call John Lomas. Meantime the unhappy youth approached his master, who, with his remaining strength, was endeavouring to get off the bed: and seizing him by the head, applied the razor so effectually, as nearly to separate it from his body; then making a precipitate retreat, crept to bed, where the girl soon afterwards found him, counterfeiting sleep.

Thus was the sanguinary purpose finally accomplished! Morrey, the innocent, unoffending victim, lay a lifeless corse; whilst Edith—the infamous, unnatural, blood-thirsty Edith, glutting her Gorgon appetite with a sight that might have “appall’d the devil,” sat unmindful of the ruin she had made.

All was still, save the dismal droppings of the blood from Morrey’s lacerated throat, in the adjoining room; and that

appalling sound would have whispered madness to any mind but Edith's; yet such was its hypocritical deformity, that with seeming sorrow she summoned the neighbours—mourned pitifully over the the sad disaster—and talked of robbers. Every place was searched in vain—no appearance justified the suspicion. What but the most gross ignorance of a bewildered and bedevilled imagination, could for a moment harbour a hope of escape, or satisfy an impartial enquiry that strangers had done the horrid deed? Would the servant's assertion, that Lomas was found asleep in bed, do away the blood-stained track which accompanied his footsteps, even to the stairs? Too soon this wicked woman found that her plots were as weak as her actions had been vile; for general suspicion extended not beyond the threshold. Lomas was interrogated, and his clothes examined; shirt, waistcoat, bed, all bore bloody evidence of the sanguinary act, confirmed at length

by voluntary confession. Not but every art of concealment was practised. His shirt was changed and placed in a box, which Edith was detected in removing. The print of a bloody hand, which in the dark Lomas had left on a table, and likewise on the stairs, was vainly endeavoured to be erased ; every testimony corroborated suspicion ; and the next day Edith and her accomplice were taken into custody. Thus foiled in every expectation ; whether through disappointment, mortification, fear, or shame, cannot be ascertained ; but e're the constables could remove her ; she made a desperate attempt to cut her throat. A surgeon however pronounced the wound not mortal, and in a short time she followed her guilty partner, in all the mockery of widow's weeds, to Chester Castle. The trial came on before the honourable R. Dallas and F. Burton ; the court was crowded beyond all former precedent, and the evidence so full and clear, that the Jury, without re-

tiring, pronounced them guilty. The dreadful axe, that fatal weapon of destruction was produced in court ; and excited strong sensations of horror ; it was remarkable for the size and weight of its head, and several marks of blood still remained. Sentence was immediately passed ; but Edith Morrey pleading pregnancy, her execution was stayed till after her delivery.

The conduct of these unfortunate prisoners, whilst confined in the Castle, exhibited a difference as striking as the guilt which brought them there. Lomas, seriously impressed with a full sense of the heinousness of his crime, and the awfulness of his situation, devoted the whole of his time to reading and prayer. Edith on the contrary entertained strong hopes of pardon ; nay, so weak was this woman's mind, that prior to her trial she was heard to say, in a strain of unseemly levity, " I wish this blind judge would come, that I might go home." Previous to ex-

ecution, Lomas expressing a wish to see her, the governor permitted an interview; at which he ingenuously confessed his crime, and frequently concluded with—"was it not so, mistress?" But Edith still prevaricated; still wished concealment: interlarding her replies with the indecently disgusting expression "*my dear lad.*" Nay, in some instances wishing to cast the blame on him; on him who, but for her machinations, would probably have remained a good and virtuous member of society; and even under the present circumstances, was an angel of light, compared to his vile seducer. On the 24th of August this unfortunate youth, at the early period of twenty years, was drawn in a cart from Chester Castle to the place of execution; a sad and dreadful example of female influence, and female depravity. His comely person and fervent piety, for he knelt and prayed without ceasing, attracted the attention, and worked upon the feelings

of thousands of spectators ; and obdurate indeed must have been that being, who could with unmoistened eye behold this lamentable, though just sacrifice to the broken laws of God and man. During Lomas's long imprisonment his mind had experienced a total change, so that he might justly be stiled "*a new creature ;*" and the blessings of religion through the Gospel, had worked such a thorough resignation to the will of God, that a degree of saint-like fortitude, and christian confidence attended him to his last moment ; and seemed to say, " I know my sins will be forgiven." That the prophetic impulse of his mind may be fully verified, " God of his infinite mercy grant." Of Edith Morrey's repentence little is at present known. She has borne her child, and as her execution will soon take place, I may probably notice it hereafter.

And now reader, what conclusion—what moral can be drawn from this tragic picture ? May we not say, that every

day's experience proves the general depravity of human nature : that it is confined to no situation, country, climate, or complexion : information is no barrier, nor ignorance a cause. It seems planted by providence in the garden of nature, like thistles amongst roses, to encrease their value by comparative estimation. In a word, it plainly tells us, that the way to happiness is by the path of virtue, and religion the only finger post to point it out.

When we first entered the chapel, the veteran's attention was deeply fixed on the male criminals, whose party-coloured dresses, the gaol livery, as it is called, and wooden clogs, rendered them conspicuous. But his eyes were soon directed to "mettle more attractive." Four young women, not destitute of personal beauty, and remarkably clean and decent, took possession of a division nearly opposite to where we sat. "Eh! what! female felons! Pity to punish the

petticoat," said the adjutant. "Every one under sentence of transportation," said I, "and so am I," whispered he archly. The old gentleman prided himself not a little in being perfect in all the orthodox manœuvres, as he called them: he could find the prayers, psalms, collects, and texts as quick as were a chaplain in the army; and then, for standings, sittings, kneelings, wheelings, he was as sharp, he said, as a fugleman. In the responses he was louder than the clerk, and frequently a sentence behind him. During the sermon, he shut his eyes in token of close attention, and when any thing particular struck him, exclaimed, loud enough to be heard by all who sat in the same seat, "very good! bravo! fire away my boy!" so that however solemn the occasion, no power of face could suppress a smile.

At dinner, Harry waited in his very best array, and to be *en militaire* as much as possible, a stiff black stock tortured

his throat, in the true line of battle order. Our repast was garnished with singular observations from the old adjutant, such as "Sir, that woman is a she d—l! she ought to be sent to h—ll for winter quarters! To be crammed into a parson's pepper box with whores, rogues, vagabonds, and murderers! imprisoned for an hour with body strippers, light fingered foragers, and all the scum of the army! properly speaking, this is a new military manoeuvre, never yet entered into my *Roster*, you understand me." To this I assented, rather than spoil his dinner, by a long explanation, though I knew no more what he meant by a *Roster*, than he would, had I mentioned *O.P.* and *P.S.*

In the afternoon a young gentleman from Liverpool, whom I had frequently seen, but never spoken to, hearing of my confinement, with a generous impulse that did credit to his heart, and made a strong impression upon mine, came down to the castle, previously arming himself.

with a bottle of rum in each pocket. The warm expressions he made use of, and his readiness to serve me, either by bail, or discharging the debt, called for, and received my grateful acknowledgments. The contents of his pockets had passed unnoticed by the turnkey, otherwise he would have been refused admission, for there is a heavy penalty annexed to the introduction of spirituous liquors—a very just and proper regulation—and when produced, I positively refused to receive them. The Governor's conduct to me had been so gentlemanly and attentive, that no inducement would have tempted me to break the rules of the prison.

The eyes of Captain Meadows sparkled at sight of the bottles, he smacked his lips, and rubbed his hands; judge then, of his mortification at seeing them again consigned to the stranger's pocket. He rose in haste, and going to the door roared out "here you orderly!" In

came Harry, and up went his hand.—
 “ You have been a serjeant you say ?—
 “ Thirteen year’s your honor.” “ In all
 that time, do you recollect a bottle of
 rum being given to a soldier, you under-
 stand me, that ever was returned till it
 was emptied?” Harry smiling, replied
 “ I think not.”

“ Think not! I am sure; never was
 such a thing heard of in the world; and,
 properly speaking, nobody in their senses
 would think of it.”

Harry was dismissed; and re-seating
 himself, he drank the stranger’s health;
 observing, with a sigh, as he put the
 cup to his lips, that “ ale was no soldier’s
 liquor, and fit only for farmers.”

I was called out at this moment to
 speak to a person at the gate; and on my
 return, found the veteran animadverting
 on the heterogenous group assembled
 that day in the chapel. “ If you will be-
 lieve me, sir,” continued he, “ I never
 was, properly speaking, in such a mixed

company before. Pandora's box never turned out such a compound of criminality, you understand me, as our garrison did this morning."

About half after eight o'clock, as Harry was turning down the captain's bed, to my no small amazement, a bottle rolled from under the coverlid, and coming in contact with the floor, was shivered to atoms. The smell of rum immediately saturated the room; and casting my eyes on the guilty, chop-fallen, mortified adjutant, I instantly conceived the extent of his imprudence. In half an hour the turnkey would visit our apartment; and should the odour of spirits greet him, much uneasiness I foresaw would be the consequence. No time was to be lost, Harry mopped, and scrubbed, and scoured; the veteran and I burnt brown paper and sealing wax; we plied our pipes with such industry, that ere Hurst's arrival, the growth of Virginia had entirely superseded the produce

of Jamaica, though at the risk of making us sick with its fumes.

I hugged myself with the idea of having escaped the effects of the old soldier's imprudence, and was preparing to blame him for it, when looking piteously on the floor, he exclaimed, "It's gone—for ever gone—more's the pity! 'Twas a drop of excellent stuff—I know by the smell; but, thanks to your considerate friend, its fellow remains behind; and, properly speaking, we'll see the bottom ere we sleep, lest some mischance, you understand me, should discover it." It was in vain to point out the impropriety of drinking so much spirit, or paint the disadvantages of intoxication. "My grog has been stopped two days," said he, "and I must march quick to recover lost ground. Come, fill your glass, and I'll tell you a good story. A corporal of mine had a pretty wife, you understand me. He was a drunken dog, and many a flogging I have saved him. Now this

pretty wife thought it better, properly speaking, to forage with the captain than the corporal ; so off we set, wet and dry, rough and smooth, to reconoitre the enemy at my friend M'Callum's, in the very heart of Scotland. You have heard of their silly notions, properly speaking their nonsensical superstition ; their witches, their wizards, their second sight, their penance, and so on—you understand me. Now it unfortunately happened—come, here's the King, God bless him—so as I was saying—Oh! it unfortunately happened that my Scotch friend had had an infant, properly speaking, laid to his charge by a servant girl. Now I, you understand me, was ignorant of this affair ; but no matter for that—come here's success to your benefit—I and Mrs. Corporal marched up to the house, and so far it was very well ; we smoked our pipes, and all was comfortable till Sunday came ; and then says friend M'Callum, “ Captain” says he “ we must march to Kirk,” I am

never in the rear on these occasions, as our Chaplain very well knows, so off we set.

Now there's a sort of place in this Kirk called Cuddy's Chair, you understand me, where those who have skirmished wet and dry, rough and smooth in the fields of unlawful love, are placed to be lectured and exposed by the Chaplain; and on this day M'Callum, properly speaking, was to do penance for past folly. I being a stranger to the place, and the Parson knowing as little of Mac as myself; what does this cunning deil of a Scot do, but, with all possible politeness, you understand me, place me in Cuddy's Chair, and retire himself to another seat. I thought this rather odd; but conceiving it the post of honor, I determined to stick to my quarters, properly speaking, till the regiment was discharged from duty. Manœuvres went on pretty well for about an hour, and though I seemed to attract as much attention as a fugle man, I placed it all, you understand me,

to the account of my regimentals. At length the Chaplain shut his book, and looking full at me said, "And noo, brethren, I mun caw this cheeld o' Satan back tae the paths o' grace, for he is a wicked sinner and the gates o' hell are gaping to receive him." Properly speaking, I did not know what to do. To desert my post would have been cowardly, and to sit tamely to be fired at like a deserter, wet and dry, rough and smooth, by this foul mouthed Priest, was a kind of non-resistance I was unused to. In short, I was, properly speaking, confounded fidgety, but still kept my ground. "Ah!" continued he "the muckle horned deel o' damnable lust has broken doon the door o' conscience, an driven oot aw the geud coonsel ye ha had fra yere ghostly monitor. Wha could ha thought a mon o' yere appearance, wha wears the leeverie o' his blessed majesty, frae whom ye ha sic a bonny example, should ha gin yersel o'er to evil concupiscence, and hellish desires? ye ha seduced a cheeld fra the paths of honor

——” Properly speaking, thinks I, that’s a lie—she was never married to the Corporal. “Oh yere a muckle sinner,” still looking at me, “an ye dunna repent the, gates o’ hell will close upon ye, and fire and brimstone be yere everlasting doom.’ He’ll spring a mine upon me presently, thinks I. ‘What recompence,’ continued he, ‘can ye mak to the victim o’ yere licentiousness; without character, without friends, a’ of which yere wickedness ha robbed her of; she mun bag—she mun starve——’ She never shall, cried I, as loud as I could bawl, she never shall while my name is Jack Meadows. The chaplain stared—the congregation smiled—and I ran out of the place, wondering how the priest came to know of my affair with the corporal’s wife. Properly speaking, I was fairly had. The laugh went against me, and does to this hour—you understand me, sir.”

The old adjutant related this anecdote with so much humour, and laughed so

heartily at his own ridiculous situation in cuddy's chair, that I could not do otherwise than join him. The joke, the smile, the grog went round ; but when, amongst other subjects of conversation, I mentioned the alarming noises which disturbed me on the first nights of my arrival, and the violences practised in the other wing of the castle, he turned pale. The man who had faced the enemy in all quarters of the globe, and had just been ridiculing the Scotch for their superstition ; looked aghast at my relation of sounds, the most alarming of which I told him, had been indirectly accounted for, by the departure of my ci-divant co-mate, the bookseller. “ Properly speaking,” said the veteran, in a low voice, looking towards the iron door, “ these things are not to be joked with. ‘They laugh at scars, who never felt a wound ;’ but I’ll tell you, upon the honour of a soldier, I was once in company with a being, properly speaking,

the ghost of a person who had been dead several years. Come, replenish, and I'll tell you the whole affair."

The bottle of rum was two parts out, and I recommended a reserve for the ensuing night; but, pressing it with both hands, he replied, "My old friend from Jamaica is a great stranger, and I'll not desert her in her last moments; wet and dry, rough and smooth, we'll stick together while life remains."

There was no arguing with so determined a votary; so getting into bed, the adjutant refilled his pipe and his glass, and at my request commenced his ghost story. "Happening one day," he began, "to be parading the Park, with my particular friend, Dan Smith, formerly major in the light infantry; I proposed to take our chop together, at the Spring Garden Coffee-house. Accordingly we adjourned; and sitting rather late over our wine, Smith, whose quarters lay at some distance, took a coach, and from

that day, you understand me, was missing; properly speaking, not to be heard of. Well sir, his friends advertised him in all the papers, with large rewards for intelligence of him, dead or alive, but without effect; the poor major had unaccountably disappeared, and if I had not brought witnesses to prove his leaving the coffee-house in a hackney coach, very unpleasant consequences would have resulted to myself; because, you understand me, I was the last person he messed with.

“ Well, sir; about nine years afterwards, during which I had been fighting the enemy, wet and dry, rough and smooth, in various places; sauntering before the Horse Guards, who should I meet but the identical man himself—my friend Smith, properly speaking, in propria persona. You may conceive my joy at the meeting, and the questions I poured down upon him respecting his absence. But my astonishment at finding him alive,

was, if possible, exceeded by his refusing to satisfy my very natural curiosity, as to the cause of his disappearance, or the place of his retreat. In a word sir, he requested me in a solemn voice, to ask no questions, for he would answer none.

“ During this conversation we pursued our march, you understand me ; but rain coming on, I proposed to celebrate our meeting in the same place, and in the same manner, we had done our parting ; namely, to take a bottle and a chop at the Spring Garden Coffee-house. The bare mention of the thing threw him into an agony ; he turned pale—his lips quivered—and in faltering accents he replied, ‘ Not there ! name not that place if you wish me to keep my senses ! ’ Properly speaking, I looked surprised, as you may well imagine ; but having no particular preference, begged him to name a house less objectionable. To this we repaired, and while dinner was preparing, you understand me, amused

ourselves with a backgammon table. In the middle of our game, a coachman entered, and whispered my friend; but without appearing to regard him, he said, ‘Meadows, why don’t you throw?’

“There is no hurry, I replied, looking at the coachman. After a moment’s pause, he again repeated, ‘Why don’t you throw?’ I will, rejoined I, as soon as you have settled your business.

“ ‘Business!—Nonsense! who should I have business with?’

“With the man who has been whispering in your ear these five minutes.

“ ‘A man?’

“Yes, a coachman.

“ ‘A coachman!!!’ shrieked out my friend, ‘Good God! you don’t say a coachman?’

“Yes, but I do. You have some appointment, I suppose, and this is the go-between.

“ ‘I am in no humour to bear a joke,’ replied Smith, and indeed the perspira-

tion stood upon his forehead. ‘ If you do not indeed dream, speak—say—has the man lost an eye ?

“ He has.

“ Poor Smith instantly fell back in his chair, and properly speaking, I thought he was dead. After a time however, he recovered ; but so pale and feeble, that I became seriously alarmed, and begged a doctor might be summoned. This he peremptorily refused, and after taking a glass of wine, thus addressed me. ‘ I will no longer attempt Meadows, to conceal my disastrous story, for murder they say, will out, though it be hid i’t’h’ centre. You recollect putting me into a hackney coach nine years ago ; at which time my naturally irritable temper was a good deal heightened by the wine I had drank. The coachman wishing to impose upon me, and besides, using language I thought altogether impertinent, I struck him a violent blow on the temple ; from which he sank, never to rise again ! Hor-

rified at what I had done, and fearful of the consequences, I got on board a vessel, which proved to be an American, crossed the Atlantic, and only returned yesterday to my native country. It was my firm intention to have enquired after the family, if any such there are, of the deceased ; but this supernatural visitation has whetted my purpose ; and if you will assist my search, it will be the greatest favour you can confer on me.' To make short of my story, sir, we found the poor man's widow and two children nearly starved ; my friend made all the reparation he could—settled a comfortable annuity upon the woman—put the children out 'prentice—and never was afterwards haunted by the *spectre* of *Coachee*."

At the conclusion of this story, finding I made no answer, he bawled out, " Are you asleep, my boy ?"

" No—I was meditating on the probability of what you have been relating."

“ Probability ! I tell you it’s true, as Dan Smith would testify if he were here ; though, properly speaking, he’s better any where else. You never were in Egypt, you say ? ”

“ Never out of my native country, any further than the Isle of Man.”

“ When I was in Egypt, sir, with my gallant old general——come here’s to the memory of the brave Abercrombie.—I say, when we were in camp opposite the French army—I was in the cavalry then—we used frequently, at the out-posts, to talk with the French officers ; our horses and their’s head and shoulder, the line of demarkation between us. Properly speaking, it’s a sad thing that fellow-creatures, in perfect harmony with each other, should laugh and talk in civility and friendship one moment, and cut one another to pieces the next. But there always have been wars, and rumours of wars, and so I suppose it will continue to the end of the chapter. Heigho ! Why

soldiers, why, should we be melancholy, boys?" This strain was sung with a degree of feeling, both for the vanquished and the conqueror, that did honor to his heart.

The bottle being out, he prepared for bed; and whilst disrobing himself, continued in the old strain,—“Major, says I, and says I to the major; dress the right wing, says I. Serjeant Thompson’s horse slipped, just as I gave the word to charge sword in hand, down he went, and——what the d—l’s coming now?”

“What’s the matter?”

“Did you not hear a whistle?”

“No.”

“I’ll swear there was one in our lobby. No one sleeps there, you say?”

“No one. It’s Bet, at some of her old pranks.”

“Do you think so? Properly speaking, I’m primed to receive her, so fire away, old girl.” He then, though not without some difficulty, threw himself

into bed, singing, "How merrily we live that soldiers be."

"I had scarcely fallen into a sound sleep, ere I was disturbed by a hoarse voice, roaring out with the lungs of a Stentor, "*Dress! dress! I say!*" Not immediately recollecting the tones of my comrade, I imagined it was a command to rise, and started up to learn the reason; but was soon convinced it arose from the adjutant, who in his sleep was issuing orders, it had been his pride and duty to enforce.

Our elevated situation overlooked the different wards appropriated to the convicts; and as I was pointing them out, on the following day, to captain Meadows, an old man busily tending some poultry, and who seemed to take particular pleasure in the office, claimed my attention. "Poor Jemmie of the wood!" thought I, "this old man, like thee perhaps, has no companion but his fowls."

Curiosity led me to enquire into his story, which was briefly as follows.

He had been a man of respectable habits, and farmed his own little property ; but being bound for a friend, the rascal ran away, and the result was, a bankruptcy, to which he refused to appear. In vain his lawyer represented the consequences—he preferred death to the certainty of reducing his family, by such means, to want and beggary. The catastrophe is easily foreseen.—He was condemned to die ; but through the interest of his connexions, the sentence was mitigated to fourteen years transportation. Too old to be sent abroad, his punishment was confined to a solitary cell in Chester Castle, and every assizes he was brought up, to know if he would regain his liberty by giving up his effects. To this he invariably and undauntedly replied in the negative. His wife and children were comfortably supported, at the expense of his bodily sufferings ; and

as their welfare appeared to be the only object of his consideration, he patiently awaited the fulfilment of his captivity. Time rolled on, without other intercourse than what his poultry afforded—thirteen years had elapsed at the time I saw him; and he was looking forward to a joyful meeting with his family, in whose society he hoped comfortably to end his days; when death, six months afterwards, put an end to his hopes and his sufferings; and filled every one who knew the story with regret, that such magnanimity—such real greatness of mind—failed to secure to their possessor those blessings, a banishment of nearly fourteen years deserved. I leave the admirers of heroic deeds, and the friends of humanity to moralize on this mournful tale, whilst I pursue my narrative.

As the particulars of my arrest and imprisonment were not generally known, nor the circumstances under which the debt was incurred; I thought it advisable

to draw up a statement of facts; in the form of a letter addressed to my prosecutor; which I did, and published it in the Chester Chronicle of the 1st of January, 1813; of which the following is a copy.

TO —. —. ———, ESQ.

Manager of the Theatre Royal, ———.

SIR,

“After avoiding a prison through the whole of my disastrous life, and scarcely supposing myself, during the last twenty years, *less liable* to visit one, I address you from this place, where in all probability, from my incapacity to pay your demand, I shall long remain a melancholy example of your *insatiate avarice*, and most *unforgiving heart*.”

For many, many years, you have witnessed the hard struggles, and persevering industry with which I have sought a livelihood, whilst you, during the same period, have lived in luxury, arising from no bodily or mental efforts of your own, but from the fortuitous circumstance of being Manager of the Theatres Royal ——— and ———, and having a mind exalted above those feelings which pity engenders, but which too often, keep their owner poor and necessitous.

So much by way of Prologue—now listen to the Play.

In the year 1810 it so happened, that you had no company to open the ——— Theatre during the Race week, and as I had fortunately accumulated a sum of money by the management of the Chester Theatre during the Races, which enabled me to enter into a negotiation for ———, I agreed to give you 150*l.* for the Race, and two succeeding weeks ; but as the Circus was likely to open, in opposition to the Theatre, of course it became an obstacle in the way of treaty, till removed by you in your letter dated the 7th of May, wherein you thus express yourself—“ the proprietors *certainly* mean to stop the exhibitions of the Circus in the Race week.” Again, May 13th, “ The proprietors of the Theatre intend shutting up the Circus in the Race week, by virtue of their patent.”

“ Decoyed by the expectation you held out, although there was no specific agreement on your part, (except your being one of the proprietors) to close the Circus, yet, from the power your letters led me to suppose the proprietors possessed, and from your assertion, that they proposed to exert that power, I suffered myself to be deluded, and closed with your terms.—The Circus, however, opened, without one effort to prevent it, not, I believe from want of inclination, but power in the proprietors, and the injury done to the receipts of

the Theatre, I moderately calculate at 300*l.* Thus my profits at Chester were sacrificed to pay you 125*l.* leaving me your debtor, as the writ by virtue of which I was arrested, specifies, in the sum of 25*l.* and upwards, for which I am now suffering incarceration in this melancholy place."

"It is I believe a general practice amongst *gentlemen* of the law, to make peaceful *application*, before they proceed to hostilities; yet without any previous demand, I was dragged from my peaceful domicile, at Parkgate, and thrown into a state of immediate expense; and perhaps lasting imprisonment."

"When we judge the actions of others, 'tis but fair to reverse the picture, and placing ourselves in their situation, enquire of conscience how we should act under similar circumstances; accordingly "*thinks I to myself,*" had Mr. — taken a Theatre of *me*, at an *enormous* rent, and under such *disadvantages*—after punctually paying me 125*l.*—*could I, would I,—or ought I—to put him in prison for the trifling remainder? thereby paralyzing his future efforts for the maintenance of an aged parent, and an affectionate wife, whose very existence depends on his exertions? Certainly I should not, yet this you have done, and I leave the public to judge between us.*"

"Now Mr. —, "to supper with what appetite you may." Having unburthened my mind, I bear

you no malice; but hope, though late, repentance may work reformation, and produce forgiveness, when you are summoned down the bourn to appear at that court, from whence no traveller returns to tell the sentence."

S. W. RYLEY.

In Chester Castle, Dec. 14, 1812.

Matters were now drawing to a conclusion. My benefit was to take place the following day, and to add to my comfort, Mrs. Ryley arrived from Parkgate, with a fresh supply of poultry, eggs, and butter. The adjutant, after a most ceremonious bow, for he was a complete gentleman of the old school, looked at the basket, then at my little wife; "Why madam," said he, "here's provision enough to enable us to hold the siege some time:—properly speaking, there's nothing like a female-forager—you understand me. You'll excuse the freedom of an old soldier, madam; I've a wife at home, God bless her! as full of spirits and good humour as yourself."

“What, Mrs. Corporal?” interrupted I, with a smile.

“Oh fie!” exclaimed he, hobbling out of the room, “Honor—honor.”

He was nevertheless pleased, although he pretended modesty; for he liked to be thought a man of gallantry, with which most of his stories were interspersed.

To hear of the health of my little establishment, was no trifling addition to the happiness I experienced on beholding the partner of my long pilgrimage through a wilderness of trouble, cheerful as ever; and sanguine in her expectations of my speedy enlargement. How a little affliction enhances the value of returning comfort! Not all the privations I at first underwent; the cold stone chamber—the iron doors—the alarming noises—with many other miseries imagination is ever fruitful to engender—could be esteemed a high price for the pleasure I enjoyed over an excellent

dinner, in company with one whose health and happiness were dearer to me than my own; and those heightened by the good-humoured eccentricities of the old veteran. When the homely dinner appendages were disposed of, a bottle of wine, accompanied by the adjutant's pipe, made their appearance; and some worthy Chester friends dropping in, to say the prison fire-side was rendered comfortable, would be but feebly to express my feelings.

When Harry entered with a replenish of wine, he informed us that the poor methodist in the opposite wing had been holding forth in the preaching line; "And," continued he, "I don't half like his doctrine; for he says there should be no soldiers but in the regiment of grace, and no fighting but with the devil." "The devil he does!" exclaimed the adjutant, laying down his pipe; "show me the man, I'll battle him on that sub-

ject—no soldiers, eh?” and away went Harry in perpendicular order, followed by the hobbling adjutant, repeating “No soldiers, eh?”

As a considerable time elapsed, and the veteran returned not, I called Harry to know the reason; dreading, from his impetuosity, that he and the debtors on the other side might have fallen out. “Oh no, sir,” replied Harry, “he has made them all fall in; for he ordered every man a pint of ale, and they formed the line in a moment. He then harangued them on the broad-sword exercise, and I left him teaching the methodist preacher to cut six.”

This was too great a treat to be omitted. In a body we crossed the court, and there, sure enough, was the old soldier, flourishing his stick, whilst the affrighted disciple of methodism stood with his back to the wall, holding out a hymn-book, and exclaiming in a feeble voice, “Satan, I defy thee.” A large

can of ale stood on the table, from which the debtors drank plentifully, styling the old gentleman "the commander;" a title he was not a little pleased with; and promising to be "ready for drill again whenever he gave the word of command." In short, his singular goodness of heart, and harmless irregularities, gained the love and esteem of all his fellow-prisoners. Even the methodist became attached to him, whilst the adjutant, in return, told us he thought him "a d—d good Christian."

My wife left us at nine o'clock, and as this was probably the last night we should pass together, I indulged my companion's fondness for sitting, and listened with more than usual complacency to all his "perils in the tented field." Again he headed the Mamelukes in Egypt—in an instant he removed to Seringapatam, and Tippoo Saib lay covered with heaps of slain. But when he came to "Major says I"—and "says I to the

major ;” my courage failed me—I sought my safety by inglorious flight, and settled myself, for the last time, on my iron bed. As the captain had forgot to replenish his tobacco-box, he shortly after followed my example ; and this was the only night I passed at the castle undisturbed by noises of some kind.

In the morning I took a transient leave of my fellow captives ; my parole extending to the following day. My brother actors welcomed my appearance amongst them ; tickets were in general request ; the curtain drew up to eighty-four pounds, and all dread of gaols, attorneys, and bum-bailiffs vanished into air.” The *Cure for the heart ache* was complete ; and at the end of the play, I came forward to return thanks to my excellent Chester friends, a grateful “ *Prisoner at large.*” The following day the debt and expenses were paid, amounting to upwards of forty pounds ; although the legal business on my side was done gratis ; and this act

of kindness I owe to a little, eccentric gentleman, who honours me with his esteem ; a man who never yet sacrificed the noble energies of his heart to private interest, nor soiled his fair fame by a dirty action ; a man who has preserved his integrity in a profession, where, to say the best of it, it is difficult to be honest ; I mean S—— H——, Esq. deputy prothonotor of the City of Chester.

On my return to the castle, I was pleasingly surprised to hear of Mrs. Meadows' arrival. Her husband, recognizing my voice in the lobby, called out, " I'm taken prisoner, my boy. You had no sooner left the camp, than a spy, in female attire, rushed in, and laid me under contribution. We now entered the room, and the adjutant introduced us to a fine looking, and comparatively young female ; whose lady-like manners, and unaffected good humour, spoke the woman of fashion, and the pleasant, agreeable companion. " Come," continued he,

clapping me on the shoulder, “a general salute—I insist upon it—a *fue de joie* for the honour of the petticoat.” “Nothing loath,” I obeyed his command, and we formed as happy a dinner party as ever assembled within the walls of a prison. Disparity of years seemed no drawback upon the felicity of the adjutant and his charming wife; politeness and the most sedulous attention on his part, were returned by his lady with never-varying good-humour; to which was added uncommon discernment, and a flow of intelligence, arising from travel, and the society of well-informed people.

This excellent woman brought news almost as welcome as herself. The bill-holders proposed a fair compromise, and a few days would, in all probability, allowing for the plundering delay of the *glorious uncertainty*, restore him to the pleasing enjoyment of domiciliary comforts; for they lacked not pecuniary aid—their circumstances were easy—and to

them the winter of life bore no alarming aspect ; whilst I——but stop, my pen ; nor let the dreary prospect urge me to ingratitude. That providence, whose power unseen has kindly brought me to the shore so often, may yet stretch forth a hand to harbour me in peace.

The time of separation arrived ; we took leave of the worthy adjutant and his amiable wife with regret ; somewhat lessened by the promise of a visit, “ When we shall laugh,” said he, “ over our campaign in the Chester barracks, and fire away our pipes, and drink our grog without fear of the enemy.”

Seated in the coach, my mind circulated with the wheels, every turn of which brought me nearer to the cottage of comfort. “ What joy will there be,” thinks I ; and I was not disappointed. The old lady wiped her eyes—the servant smiled—my animals came round me—cats, dogs, poultry, pigs—even my cow

applied her rough tongue to my hand, in grateful token of remembrance.

I have unavoidably been led into a wider field of narrative than I at first intended; as a man who mounts his horse to ride one mile, is induced to go five, from the variety of the scenery which surrounds him.

When I look back on the quantity of paper I have soiled, I marvel at my own presumption, in supposing any one will wade through such a folio of nonsense; but, like a spoiled child, I presume on former indulgences; and again stagger out, a rickety baby in the rugged field of letters.

The success of the three former volumes of the Itinerant, has puffed me up with a flattering hope that the more immediate concerns of the author might possibly excite some degree of interest; and that presumption has led me to be perhaps unpardonably circumstantial; both in detailing my fruitless enquiry, and the

subsequent event, which lodged me in Chester Castle. All I can say in my own defence is, that I have adhered to truth, as far as it was either material or interesting—perhaps too minutely; for, lovely as she is, unless fancy supply a pleasing costume, she will have few admirers; and whenever I have deviated, it has not been to injure, but improve the picture; by giving a lively tint to every feature of fact, whereby the portrait might become more generally interesting.

I shall now proceed with the memoirs of Romney, and thus forever end the dispute between me and myself, whether there should be a

PREFACE or no PREFACE.

S. W. RYLEY.

*Chapel Cottage, Parkgate,
Feb. 3d, 1813.*

THE ITINERANT.

CHAP. I.

“KNOW YOUR OWN MIND.”

ARTHUR MURPHY.

A KNOWLEDGE, of all others, the most difficult to attain; nay, it appears almost impracticable; for the greater store of wisdom a man possesses, the less likely he is ever to accomplish it; according to the Spanish proverb, “A wise man changes his mind often, a fool never.” If this adage be true, I must be a second Solomon; for no man has changed his mind oftener.—Not from fickleness, but from an undeviating principle, never to sacrifice conviction to consistency, or to maintain an opinion a moment longer than I was persuaded of its truth. Want of a proper confidence in our reasoning faculties, causes a too easy acquiescence in the opinions of others; by which means the well-intentioned and modest man, often becomes a prey to the crafty and designing. A

weakness of this kind, I confess, has many times led me into error; but whatever changes have taken place in my chequered, eventful, and hard-fated career, they have always been undertaken from a conviction that the alteration would be for the better, although they frequently added to those burthens they were meant to relieve. When any present means of obtaining an honest existence becomes unproductive, nay ruinous if continued, is any man, for the sake of obtaining a character for stability, to pursue a plan by which he is evidently sinking deeper into the quicksands of ruin, throw the reins upon the neck of fortune, and suffer the blind jade to tumble into the pit of destruction? No! the man of industrious energy will dismount, leave the dull, senseless animal to kick, and plunge, and flounder by itself, and endeavour to wade out by his own efforts.

A false and mortifying opinion has long obtained amongst many who honor me with their friendship, that the misfortunes I have met with through life, have arisen from a disposition prone to change, and never satisfied long together with any one pursuit.

I once knew a gentleman whose ruddy countenance and robust appearance gave every indication of florid health, whilst at the same time he was labouring under a severe internal malady, which

rendered life a burthen to himself, and he became fretful and peevish to those about him. To add misery to torture, his friends laughed at his complaining, or made a point of saluting him with "I am glad to see you look so well this morning; never fancy yourself ill again, for you are absolutely in a plethora of health." This cut him to the soul; to raise a laugh and a doubt of his sincerity, in the breasts of those from whom he might naturally expect condolence, was more than he could bear; and to prove the reality of his sufferings, he pointed a pistol to his head, and by one fatal action, put an end to his life, and the foolish ill-judged levity of his friends.

Although this may not be an instance exactly in point, yet, when I compare circumstances I think the feelings must be nearly similar, though I trust, they will never be equally fatal. How galling! how heart breaking! when labouring with honest intention to lighten a load of pecuniary embarrassment, when every effort proves retrograde, and the acute feelings of an aching heart throw a gloom on the countenance, to be laughed at as an hypochondriac, giving way to dejection without cause, to be the jest of otherwise well meaning friends, who, themselves floating down the stream of life in easy circumstances, have no idea that the bark which accompanies them, though it seems to sail equally

swift, has sprung a leak, and but for "all hands to the pumps," must inevitably founder.

Wrong conclusions have often turned aside the friendly hand of assistance, when struggling with difficulties that many would have sunk under; yet I attach no blame; had the kind hearts of my friends reasoned from causes, rather than effects, they would have been convinced that I did know my own mind, and that, however appearances might deceive, my every effort and exertion against the wind and tide of fortune, were used to steer, if possible, into a harbour of fixed and stationary fire side comfort, the polar star of all my earthly wishes.

When "the Itinerant became stationary," I knew my own mind; but not having the gift of prescience, I could not foresee that all my efforts would prove unavailing. When I wrote "Finis," at the end of the third volume I knew my own mind, but I did not know how soon my usual attendant evil genius, would supply me with matter, and hard necessity compel me to take up the pen in continuation.

The truth of these remarks, will, I trust, be obvious in the following pages; and if they have the happy effect to prove to those who know me, or rather who do *not* know me, that my every wish

centres in quiet, domestic happiness, I shall be gratified. As I observed before, I think in the preface to the first volume, the building is founded on facts, though some parts of the superstructure may be embellished with different materials ; but, if the *tout ensemble* possess a pleasing, without a pernicious tendency; if, whilst it afford entertainment, it may convey instruction, or call into action the noble and generous energies of the heart, I trust the moralist, the philosopher, and rational christian will grant me some small share of credit, and allow that though I may not know my *own* mind, I have from long experience, obtained a small knowledge of *other people's*.

CHAP. II.

“ TIME’S A TELL-TALE.”

HENRY SIDDONS.

“ WOULD it were possible to stop its loquacity !” said a friend of mine, whose visage bore evident marks of decay. “ Fifty summers have passed over my head, tis true, but why should the world be told of this. Cannot a man go *fairly* and *smoothly* to his grave, without a sign of information ?”

‘ Time,’ that ‘ stays for no man,’ has for fifty-four revolving years whirled *me* in its vortex, and the kind hand of providence still suffers me to vegetate, an unprofitable weed ; but if spared to finish this work, the effort, though unsuccessful, may surely *lay* claim to good intention, since it chiefly originates in an ardent wish to procure for a better being than myself, those comforts which

the decline of life requires, and for which a four and thirty year's attachment to one of fortune's discarded children, has left her very little chance of from any other source.

Yet I despair not. Time does not always tell a melancholy tale. Amidst the various calamities that are mixed in the cup of life, I should be ungrateful not to acknowledge, that the sweet and the bitter have been more equally blended than mankind in general allow. We are apt to recollect the miserable *moments*, and to forget the pleasurable *hours* that have been interwoven in the web of our existence, and ingratitude appears to me to be a prevailing principle in human nature. Tom Bangup, brought by dissipation to the bed of sickness and repentance, exclaims, "Ah doctor! if you can but bring me round this time, no pecuniary reward will be too great, and my heart will pant only to shew its gratitude." Then addressing heaven, "If it may please the Divine Being once more to restore me to health, my repentance shall be evinced in my practice, and I will become a *new man*." Tom recovers—the doctor sends in his bill—the contents are scrupulously examined—and the sum total never paid! His reformation is shewn at the cockpit, in oaths and imprecations; even the name of that God whose power he confessed in the hour of sickness, is treated with con-

tempt, and Tom's *new man* is worse than his *old one*. Such is human nature!—poor, weak, fallible, inconsistent human nature! The pillow of calm reflection brings contrition and promised reformation, we rise—we forget it; night again brings us to repentance, and the sun again shines upon our sins; so we go on, through each revolving year, till the tell-tale finger of time, puts a period to the contest in the grave.

In the year 1802, I found myself stationary; and Ann was fortunate enough to procure a couple of lodgers, gentlemen of worth and respectability, who paid nearly the rent and taxes. This was all very well; to live rent free was a comfortable idea; but there were daily wants to be supplied, besides a budget of ways and means to be opened for the benefit of my creditors. These two grand objects could be provided for, I foolishly thought, by an engagement at the regular summer theatre, which was easily obtained under the new managers Messrs. Lewis and Knight: appropriating the salary for our maintenance, and dedicating the benefits to the liquidation of my debts. Silly conclusions, drawn from weak premises! was it probable that 500*l.* could be paid by the profits of a yearly benefit in any time that the most indulgent creditors would wait? or that three people could be supported on two pounds per week, and that for

only six months in the year? my eyes were soon opened to the fallacy of this, and the heart beating disquiet which every honest man feels at the daily sight of numerous, though liberal creditors, kept mine in constant palpitation. Every knock at the door gave an alarm to my feelings, and dyed my countenance with livid paleness; naturally irritable I now became so painfully sensitive, that, "Sir you are wanted," sounded like the knell of death, and acted upon my muscular powers, like the bite of a torpedo. "Oh that mine enemy were in debt!" the most malevolent character under heaven could not utter a more malicious wish against his direst foe, nor would I, God knows, against any created being.

For the Summer months, with a few exceptions time passed smoothly enough, (my mortifications in the theatre under the new management are too contemptible to be brought into the account) but, early the morning after my benefit, John Doe and Richard Roe, alias two bailiffs, paid me a visit; at the suit of my intimate friend! A man to whom my heart, my house were open! A man who knew every circumstance of my situation, and by whose advice I acted, as though he were a brother. This unaccountable circumstance affected my repose far more than the inside of the sponging-house—that had few terrors; even the bailiff was

kind ;—friends flew to my assistance, and in a few hours I returned to my wife, rather pleased than otherwise ; because it brought to the touchstone of truth, both my *pretended* and my *real* friends.

The theatre now closed for the season, and with it my means of existence. Many an heart-felt pang, many a sleepless night followed, ere I could fix upon a plan to remedy this deficiency ; but at the very crisis of my despair, the owners of the riding school, intending to erect a circus, offered it to me for 200*l.* a year. This evidently struck me as probably advantageous. An architect drew the plan, and every thing was verbally fixed, but no writings signed. The time for opening the new amphitheatre was ascertained, and with the knowledge of the proprietors, I engaged burletta singers, opera dancers, and other eccentric amusements, from London, to be down at Liverpool on a certain day. The time came, my new company arrived—but the place was unfinished and likely for several weeks at least to remain so. What was to be done ? the people were true to their appointment, and must be paid, which was out of my power, without value received from their services. In this dilemma the only scheme I could hit upon was taking a large room till the circus was ready, which I accordingly did, and hired timber and a

painter to make it look as theatrical as possible. Meantime, as magisterial sanction was necessary, I suffered the mortification of dancing attendance on the leisure of a proud, imperious man, whose superior, I might wishout much egotism, easily conceive myself in every thing but money. To make short of a disagreeable story, the place was kept open a fortnight, to very indifferent houses, when I was ordered—unexpectedly ordered—on the day of performance, to shut it up, on the plea that there was a possibility of the room taking fire, and being corporation property, they did not chuse to risk it by a public exhibition. To argue with the sapient members of this erudite body would avail nothing, they had the power in their own hands, and of course paid very little regard to my feelings or property.

My engagements were made for three months, and it was my duty to fulfil them. In order to this, I took the Chester Theatre with very poor hopes of success, for that city, at the best of times, can never more than barely pay the nightly expenses of a respectable theatrical company, what then had I to expect, with so little attraction? but there was no alternative, so to Chester I went, and in five weeks I was minus 50*l.* this, with the loss of one hundred, on the same account at Liverpool, increased my debts to an alarming degree. To add

disappointment to misery, the proprietors had, during my absence finished the circus, and let it to another tenant at an advanced rent, thereby proving themselves to be men devoid of principle or integrity: I have, since then had sufficient cause for triumph, had that been in my my nature, which I thank God it is not, for pecuniary embarrassments soon obliged them to sell the circus for what they could get, and I hope they repent their conduct towards me.

The opening of the amphitheatre had one good effect, I transferred my engagements to the then manager, and so got rid of a business which hung like a ton weight upon my efforts, and chained me to a burthen too intolerable to bear. I shall not enter into a more minute detail of this unpleasant business, though "I could a tale unfold would harrow up the soul," at least it harrowed up my soul more than any event of my past life. At this moment, though the circumstances are long gone by, it gives me a feverish sensation, and for fear of contagion, I will lead my readers to other scenes. Indeed, I should not dwell at all upon these years of my existence, perhaps the least pleasant in the whole fifty-four, but to satisfy those who really know me, and might cavil at the omission; to the casual reader, or those who open a book to kill time, it will be irksome, and uninteresting.

I was one day relating to a friend, the history of my losses and disappointments, when he very seriously advised me, as a plan that carried with it a possibility of redemption, to open my house as a Tavern. "You are a well known character," added he, "your company will be sought, your house filled; and, with so fair a prospect, no doubt, your creditors will have patience." So argued my friend; and though nothing could be less consonant with my feelings, or those of my wife, yet, as a drowning man catches at straws, I followed his well meant advice, and went through all the gradations of mortification. First, a paper was to be signed by the neighbours, giving their assent; secondly, as it is impossible that the bare solicitation of an honest poor man, for leave to get his bread—though the chance is two to one against him—can have any weight with magisterial importance, unless, indeed, his private interest be concerned, the business must, if effected at all, be done through the medium of some great man. Accordingly, by the kind interference of Sir George D——, I had leave to wait in the anti-chamber of an inflated representative of majesty, till with that awe commanding dignity, at which fools are frightened, and wise men laugh, he condescended to grant me leave to ruin myself completely. A tavern-keeper is a man above all others, who should be a strict follower of St. Paul, "all things to all men," for the good of

himself. His stomach should be made of Indian-rubber, ready to expand at his customers' command; his mind a vacuum; his head a cullender, through which his brains are filtered as the caprice of company may require: he must drink with the drunkard, eat with the glutton, have no opinion of his own, and receive insult according to rank. For instance, a lie from a lord, a d—n from a doctor, and a kick from a captain; in short, he should resemble one of those appendages to pipes and tobacco, called a spitting-box, or general receptacle to receive the offscourings of empty heads and full stomachs. If he be not this, or something like it, he will never prosper. If his mind be independent, and he have a spirit equal to the support of it, the hinges of his wine-cellar will rust for want of use; and the only sale of his wares be through the medium of the auctioneer's hammer. To those whose education and habits have fitted them for such occupations, who, from the butler's pantry to the tap-room, find the change no way irksome, nor a descent from the coach-box to the cellar a degradation; to such the situation of a publican may have its attractions: strangers to the more refined feelings, for lack of education only perhaps, "the feast of reason" to them is a public dinner, "and the flow of soul," the payment of the bill.

Those who have read the three former volumes

of the Itinerant, will, I flatter myself, have discovered, that I had nothing of the landlord about me. Nevertheless, having undertaken it through an honest motive, as a last and desperate resource, it was my wish and intention to bear with philosophy the unpleasant part, if by that means, I might be enabled to discharge my obligations to worthy and indulgent friends. I shall not dwell on this miserable and degrading part of my life; though I could fill a few pages with anecdotes of *captains* who *swindled* me out of my property, and *gentlemen* who ran up bills, and then ran away. These drawbacks, together with the load of debt under which I commenced my career, soon convinced me, that though the evil day might be procrastinated, it would come at last; and that the wisest plan would be to hasten its approach. With this view, I convened my creditors, who, with a generosity I shall be ever ready to acknowledge, agreed to a composition which left my household furniture at my own disposal. Should providence ever enable me, I should be a wretch undeserving of its blessings, did I not discharge to the full my obligations to these worthy people; at present, the prospect is very distant, though with a magnifying glass I sometimes fancy I can catch a glimpse of it.

Never did poor criminal leave the walls of a prison with more joy than I left my tavern, and took

a small house at the annual rent of twenty pounds. Will my friends call this the effect of a fickle and never to be satisfied disposition? a rambling propensity? or will they not rather call it a prudent step to avoid being stationary in a jail.

Very many years previous to this, I had amused myself by writing a few chapters of my life; these one of my best friends by accident read, and advised me by all means to proceed. I had now plenty of leisure, the idea was a good one, and twelve hours out of the twenty-four found me settled at my writing table. The hopes of emolument gave a spur to industry, and the work proceeded rapidly, aided by my little female secretary, who made fair copy of what I could scarcely read when finished, owing to the haste in which it was written. But how procure the means of existence during this period? "while the grass grows——" I could finish the sentence, but the proverb is somewhat stale.—Have patience gentle reader—don't hurry me—and you shall know all. The first question I asked myself, when settled in our comfortable little mansion, was, 'how are we to live?' Gold and silver I have none, and friendship has done its utmost. No matter! to beg, almost to starve, is better than continually to labour under a load of debt, without the possibility of payment; rise and look forward; shake thyself—the world is yet, thank God, open

to honest efforts. As when some poor, half-drowned dog, makes shift to reach the shore, shakes off the remnant of the element he has just escaped, nor looks behind, but speeds in search of sustenance and shelter ; so I, hugging myself amidst the lighter misery, shook off the old, nor cast a thought upon the past, but roused my energies, to find, if possible, in the resources of my own mind, a livelihood ; a something, an any thing, rather than return to the stage, whose members are ill thought of, and worse paid ; ‘ ’tis true ’tis pity, and pity ’tis, ’tis true.’ The profession of an actor requires greater versatility of talent, to become eminent, than any other ; and yet the pecuniary advantages arising from it in the country are not much greater than the cross-legged son of the shopboard, or the maker of a mahogany table is entitled to. Poverty generally foreruns contempt, and from this cause, for I can assign no other, arises the proud neglect that the sons and daughters of Thespis too often encounter. It is not genius, it is not talent—a boundless mind, or intelligent and expanded ideas that are wanted on ’Change ; no ! the *expanded purse*, and *boundless credit*, are all that is required there.

Sir John Falstaff says, “ grief puffs a man up wonderfully :” with all due deference to the worthy knight, I think trade and commerce puff up a man much more strangely. How ridiculous ! to behold

the elated sons of avarice and barter, for I cannot separate them, swelling with inflated pride, and looking down on genius and talent, merely because they are in possession of a few bags of cotton, which perhaps by the next post, is so far reduced in price, that eighteenpence in the pound is all that remains for their creditors. How contemptible ! to observe the clustered groups, meeting with a cordiality and warmth of friendship, which an innocent inhabitant of Hindostan would be led to think were eager and anxious inquiries how they might serve each other : when, alas ! the very contrary is the fact. Under the specious mask of friendship and suavity of manners, they lie, “ like cat on watch,” ready to take advantage, and he that does it most completely is the best tradesman. I once had the *honour* of being noticed by one of these *raw materials*. Behind the scenes, he was wonderfully interested in my health and prosperity, nay, extended his kind inquiries to Mrs. R——; by the bye, this was not for lack of more general powers of conversation, for had the topic embraced acceptances, dividends, bills down, or ‘ two months and two months,’ it is amazing how eloquent he could have been : further than this, all was sterile and barren as the top of Snowdon, his intellect might have been fathomed with a feather. In the day time I observed a strange alteration in his demeanour, which made me conclude he looked upon me as a mere *candle-light* acquaint-

ance. A distant "how are you?" was the morning salute. A rich prize came into port, the "how are you" was reduced to a nod; and various folds were added beneath his chin. Another prize deprived me of the significant nod; the roly poly which surrounded his thick neck nearly reached the environs of his nostrils, and as he erected his crest on 'change, crammed to the chin with consequence, a wheelbarrow might have passed between his legs, so truly important was his stride. A Lancashire clown once discomposed the rigidity of his feelings by the following address, "Your sarvant, sur." No answer, but a look of high disdain. "Pray sur wou'd yo be kind enough to let me a house in Lord street?" This called forth an answer, because it increased his consequence with the by-standers; and in a surly tone he replied, "Man, you mistake, I have no houses in Lord-street." "No," rejoined the clown, with peculiar archness, "by your swagger I thought you owned aw Liverpool." This well applied chastisement raised a laugh at the expense of my *candle-light acquaintance*, which I shall be glad to hear he profited by.

I beg pardon of my readers for this digression, and turn my thoughts once more to the unjust obloquy which does yet obtain among thousands against actors, notwithstanding the progressive improvement in science and civilization. To add to

the illiberal and ill-grounded prejudice the sons of the drama have to sustain, the mental drudgery they are obliged to go through, surpasses what people in general conceive. One quarter of each day, except the Sabbath, is all he can call his own, and the only portion of time allotted to imprint on his memory the long and laborious characters he has to fill: the other three are spent in the theatre; and what is the reward? how is he remunerated for this incarceration? Why, as I observed before, the wages of a journeyman tailor are nearly equal (setting benefits out of the question, which are but a chance,) to the pecuniary establishment of one, who to fill his station with credit, must possess a comprehensive mind, a refined genius, the education of a scholar, with the dress and address of a gentleman. It just now strikes me that I have said something very like this in one of my former volumes: however, let it pass, for I have them not to refer to; besides, I think these truths cannot be too often impressed on the minds of those who think the profession an *idle* or an *useless* one, and that any rubbish will make an actor.

Possessing, as may have been observed in the foregoing volumes, a mind, though subject to despondence, not easily subdued by adversity, and moderately fruitful in resources; I pondered the length of two days, in no very pleasant state, on the

means of present subsistence ; when providence, ever kind, pointed out a plan which promised a maintenance at least, during my literary labours.

The intervention of supernatural agency in human affairs is thought by many hyperbolical ; the wicked flourish, the virtuous are oppressed, the tyrant increases in power, the poor suffer, languish, and die, and no interference is perceptible ; but individually speaking, let a man on his pillow take a retrospect of his life, and he will perceive a chain of events which I humbly presume carries conviction to the mind, that a view of general objects will not perhaps always justify.

I had often been in the habit of attending private societies for the propagation of knowledge, where a question previously proposed was rationally discussed, and each member had liberty to give his free and unshackled opinion. Why not institute a public assembly on the same principle? the utility of such meetings could not be doubted, and if kept under proper regulations, would afford a rational, an instructive, and a moral amusement. The thought was no sooner engendered than put in practice ; and to its success I am indebted for comforts and relaxations during my mental labours, which could in no other way have been supplied. Indeed it was almost impossible an attempt of this

nature could fail, in a town advanced in civilization and refinement beyond any other in the kingdom, except the metropolis. I tried the same project afterwards in Manchester, but “ Oh ! what a falling off was there ! ” Whether it arose from pride, or a thirst after more frivolous and trifling pursuits, I know not, but the ladies kept aloof—they came not near me ; on the contrary, my room at Liverpool was at least one half filled by females of the first respectability and consequence, whose sanction elevated my mind, and I felt proud in saying, these, fairest of creation’s works, are my townswomen. Thus, gentle reader, I provided for our daily wants ; thus I was relieved from present embarrassment, and for this timely succour I thanked God with as much devotion as a methodist, though not quite so loud ; and with as much sincerity as a quaker, though not so silent.

“ A gentleman, a tradesman, a player, a publican, and the president of a debating society ! what will he turn to next ? ” many of my severe observers will ask. I will tell them. I would turn to any thing whereby the property and moral principles of society are not injured. “ I must eat by my honour and appetite ; ” and my stomach, like myself, has so strong a propensity for independence, though but a bread and cheese one, that it can eat an homely meal with greater relish, when

acquired by my own efforts, than a sumptuous dinner at the expense of other people.

The poor boy, with a brush for his stock-in trade, and a chimney for his warehouse, may be a better, and a more useful member of society, than the sinecure sycophant, who receives thousands from the labours of the poor, for voting away their liberties and lives; or the speculative tradesman, who sports with the property of others, and in his downfall ruins many. "But then the respectability of the calling." His is the most respectable, who, with much good; does the least injury;—ergo, poor sweep has the advantage.

When first I mounted the president's chair, "This is an odd mode of gaining a livelihood," thought I, but not therefore wrong, or worse than others. Look through the multiplicity of trades and professions, with which this mercantile town abounds, and each will have its foul and fair side. There are but two exceptions I can at this moment recollect, one is that ill-rewarded character an instructor of youth, the other a practical minister of the gospel; take the rest in regular succession, and I believe it will be found they all add, either to the luxury, dissipation, or depravity, of mankind; and yet they have all their uses, and I

should hope, eventually work together for the general good.

I was led into these reflections by the sarcasms of my friend Smirk, the bookseller. "Do you compare," said he, "the mean and paltry occupation of a debating club, to the useful, respectable, and learned business of a bookseller?" "That it is useful I allow; that it is respectable no one can deny; but how learned? A very ignorant man may vend the produce of other people's brains. I think I recollect an anecdote that bears very near upon this point;—The clerk employed by a friend of mine in Manchester, (the proprietor of a weekly journal) was one Saturday seated at his little window, distributing papers with one hand, and receiving sixpences with the other, when a country customer, no mean politician, called as usual, and impatient for the news, thus addressed the retailer of it.—"Well, what are the Danes doing now?"

"The Danes?"

"Aye, how are they going on?"

"Oh! the Danes! Why they are going on very well, but they have dissolved partnership; one of them keeps a shop in Market-street-lane, and the

other at Stockport."* Though it does not necessarily follow, that a bookseller should be a man of talents, they ought, above all others, to promote enquiry and investigation ; for if there was no controversy or difference of opinion, the sale of books would diminish, and the trade be reduced to a mere nothing. If enquiry after truth be admissable, and of that every thinking man allows, then the discussion of proper subjects in a debating club as you call it, must have a good tendency ; inasmuch as it is instructive, and calls into action that great attribute of man, reason ; bestowed by a beneficent God, to distinguish him from the brute. But allowing every thing to the glorious liberty of the press, and the channel through which it flows, yet when I find this fountain of erudition degraded into a drug shop, injuring the property, and ruining the constitution, by the sale of quack medicines, into the purchase of which the credulous are led by blazing bills at the corner of every street ; when I find this repository for learning prostituted to the purpose of legal gambling, where hundreds are attracted by the assurances of *Good Luck*, to spend their last shilling ; I say, when these things are considered, I think my calling the more innocent of the two."

* The brothers' names are *Dean*, which is invariably pronounced *Dane* in Lancashire.

My friend Smirk, during this harangue, impatiently rolled about his little black eyes, stroked his chin, adjusted his monstrous craw, and prepared for a reply.

“ A bookseller, sir,” said he, taking the skirts of his coat under each arm, and advancing his posteriors to the fire—“ a bookseller is not to be put in competition with stage-players, decayed publicans, and managers of disputing clubs. Men of the first respectability follow the business ; and if other branches are attached to it, they are institutions sanctioned by the laws of our country, and none but a diaffected mind would cavil at them. The lottery, besides benefiting the state, has enriched many individuals. This very day a sixteenth of twenty pounds came to our office ; and the medicines you call pernicious are of the greatest utility, or think you our customers would purchase them ? We have no connexion, or concern, but with the most lettered and moral classes of society ; not like the playhouse, which depends for support on pimps and prostitutes.” This eulogium on the virtue and morality of his trade and customers, was interrupted by a meagre, sallow looking, tawdry dressed female, who, putting down four and sixpence, asked, in a faint voice, for “ a box of Leake’s pills.” Smirk flew to obey the order—enquired if the last had answered expectation—wrapped the box with a

twist—rubbed his hands—bowed—and wished her good morning. After this it was useless to renew the contest ; demonstration had given the lie to his assertions ; so he sat down to his desk, and I returned home to the comfort of a good dinner, not less palatable on account of the means by which it was obtained.

What a tale has time told here ! From a degree of misery human nature could scarcely support, to comforts, long untasted, less expected, and singularly accomplished. Are these things the work of chance ? or does *infinite intelligence* condescend to notice the motions of a mite ? The tell tale, time, has convinced me of the latter ; there is no sophistry in her arguments ; long intimacy inclines her to unfold many truths that the mind of man could not before give credit to ; she always tells a true tale ; and I thank my friend, *Harry Siddons*, for so excellent a motto.

CHAP. III.

“ ENOUGH’S AS GOOD AS A FEAST.”

ANONYMOUS.

“ I hold the world but as the world,

“ A stage where every man must play his part.”

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

“ OH that mine enemy would write a book !” If it were proper to wish a particular evil to an inveterate foe, I would echo the sentence, “ let him write a book.” To write a good book requires genius, knowledge of the world, learning, and assiduity, and when it meets with success, the satisfaction resulting from it is ample remuneration : “ where then is the great misery attendant on writing a book ?” would be the general observation. When I speak of remuneration, apply it only, gentle reader, to the man, who, setting aside emolument, writes for amusement, or a love of fame. Little do the world imagine, what an author, who writes for subsistence, has to encounter ; the days and nights of

brain-bewildering study, the difficulty to please himself, the still more arduous task to please others ; the doubts which cross his mind, whilst labouring, of its ultimate success, and the lash of critics when the work is finished, render the impossibility of an adequate pecuniary compensation obvious ; at least, it obtains that bearing with me, and, in this view, I do not wish my greatest enemy so ill as to be obliged to write for bread. Not that I, individually, have cause for complaint ; the profits of the Itinerant exceeded my most sanguine expectations, but I have no bookseller to thank for that ; the circle of my friends and acquaintance was so extensive, and my life known to have been so chequered and eventful, that amongst those alone, the sale produced a handsome sum, and the popularity of the work did the rest.

In twelve months after I entered my new habitation, the three volumes of the Itinerant were ready for circulation ; and I was so stupidly ignorant as not to suspect there would be difficulties in procuring a publisher. I had an idea that any bookseller would jump at an offer where there would be no risk, and the profits enormous ; but after applying to four respectable houses, I began to think its only sale would be at my own residence, in Liverpool. One bookseller brought Joseph Surface to my mind ; his refusal was conveyed in such smooth

and obliging terms, beginning and ending with "Dear sir," though we were utter strangers to each other. The second had such a multiplicity of business upon his hands, he would not engage in any new speculation. The third had never heard either of the work or its author, therefore declined my offer; and the fourth never published any thing he did not himself print. In this dilemma, a respectable acquaintance, lately settled in London as a printer, came across my mind; to him I pointed out my difficulties, which with friendly kindness he relieved by return of post, and settled the publication with Taylor and Hessey, in Fleet-street, who had no cause to regret the undertaking.

The rapid sale of the *Itinerant* gave me so strong a tincture of the *furor scribendi*, that I turned my thoughts towards the drama. "You are a veteran in experience," cried one, "and certainly actors, who study effect, ought to paint it better than other men." This sounds like a truth, but I believe general experience gives it the lie. The best dramatic writers we have, or ever had, with a few exceptions, knew nothing of the practical part of the stage. Shakespeare indeed, for a short time filled a subaltern station in one of the theatres, but I do not conceive his plays would have suffered any diminution of merit, had he been, like his contemporaries, a mere theorist; and our modern dra-

matists undoubtedly favor my opinion ; for except Mrs. Inchbald, I do not know any writer of eminence, who has followed the stage professionally. Returning from this short digression, which the reader may place in a parenthesis without detriment to the work, I, in conjunction with my little wife, wrote the plots of two comedies—of which more hereafter, and with assiduous application, prepared them, as I fondly hoped, for representation. Mean time I was favoured with letters from various parts of the kingdom, congratulating me upon the success of my Itinerant, highly gratifying to me as an author, and demonstrative of the good will of the several writers. Perhaps I may be accused of vanity by inserting a few of them ; but if I know myself, gratitude is the prevailing principle, though even vanity might find an excuse in the undoubted respectability of my correspondents.

“ Sir,

“ I have just received the three volumes of the Itinerant, the first of which I had seen some time since, and was much entertained by its perusal.

“ Of the honour you have done me in the dedication, I assure you I am fully sensible ; and should indeed be highly gratified could I flatter myself

that I am as well entitled to the favourable opinion you have expressed of me, as I am anxious to deserve it.

“ The inclosed you will please to accept, as the subscription for my set; but it is so far from being a compensation, that it is not an equivalent for your mother’s letter of two lines, in the first volume.

“ With my best wishes for your future success in life, I remain,

“ Sir,

“ Your very faithful and obdt. servt.

“ W. ROSCOE.”

“ *Liverpool, 25th June, 1808.*”

“ *Bristol, May 10th, 1808.*

“ Dear sir,

“ You only do me justice in supposing I should take the most friendly interest in any matter that relates to your welfare, and I trust no imputation of neglect has glanced across your mind, from the delayed acknowledgment of your letter and book; being in Wiltshire on a visit when your parcel arrived, will account for my silence.

“ I was very happy to hear from you, and the perusal of your book gave me much pleasure.

“ My old friend turned author !!

“ ‘ Half way down

“ ‘ Hangs one that gathers samphire—dreadful trade.”

“ You have acquitted yourself WELL upon these *white cliffs* that overhang the roaring sea ; and like the mariner and the fisherman, labouring to gain an honest livelihood, you buffet the tempestuous deep ; and though supremely alarmed as you must be, by rocks, promontories, and all the varied snares of the ocean, yet I trust your little bark will arrive at length safe into port. Had I the wand of Prospero, that should be the case, but your own merit will prove no mean pilot.

“ I think you have caught the Shandean mantle, and it hangs very gracefully about your shoulders ; the same candour, the same philanthropy, unshackled by rules of art, that used to embellish the conversation of my friend, on our little attic evenings, shines through his work, and must excite correspondent emotions in congenial minds. From a judicious distribution of light and shade, of humorous and pathetic, the *toute ensemble* will prove more than *caviare* to the general ear. I trembled

at your first exhibition as *manager* ! Well might poor Tony say, ‘ your heart was not hard enough.’ What a situation for one, whom nature at that period, had left entirely defenceless, to the depredations of *knaves* and *rogues* in *buckram suits*—but still, *such a wife* and *such a friend*, are competent to disarm fortune in her most relentless garb ; and cause the arrows of adversity to drop, like those of *aged Priam*, ere they can fully reach the destined mark.

“ No wonder the undertaking in Duke-street stands, *aye accursed*, in your calander. That *ignominious* scheme, knowing your feelings, at once and invariably excited my surprise and abhorrence. But every man in his time plays many parts, and it is evident that the plastic hand of nature never designed you to excel in *Bonniface*.

“ I am going into South Wales for the summer ; in the course of the winter I shall be in town, where it would afford me the utmost pleasure to meet you, for I have much to say ; we live in *troublous* times, and what can be expected but to see them worse ? The gigantic strides of the modern *Alexander* are but feebly repelled by a corrupt government, and a besotted people.—No *emperi* can stand long under existing circumstances—nothing but some great affliction will restore us to our

senses—but no more preaching. G———, I believe, is affronted with me, and with reason; I ought to have written, and my sin is ever before me. Be you my advocate, and remember me to him most kindly; the truth is, I thought to have been in Liverpool this spring, but am disappointed; tell him, my regard for him *molts no feather*.—No created being is more culpable, or more full of faults than I am, and as to reformation, it dies away with me like a miser's hope. Remember me to the best of wives, in the best possible manner, and be assured that I remain in very truth,

“ Your's,

“ THOS. CROSS.

“ P. S. I shall leave Bristol in the course of a fortnight, previous to which it will give me pleasure to hear from you. *Old winter* has had a long frolic in the *lap of spring*.”

“ My dear sir,

“ I am obliged to you for your memoirs, and feel mortified to inclose you a note for one pound, when I should have been happy to send you one for twenty.

“ Mr. C——— is now at Liverpool, but when

he returns, I will put into his hand your obliging letter to me.

“ If I can get off a few copies, I will do it with pleasure, but I dare not promise myself much success ; *most* religious people, you are aware, would not peruse a work of that cast ; *I* have done it with pleasure, and hope with profit, for I wish to see human life on all sides, and those scenes, which it were dangerous in ourselves to witness, to the reflecting mind must afford information, in the description of living actors. I have put it into my children’s hands, as an antidote, and my unhappy B—— is a warning beacon. He is alive, and I hope well, though a few years ago he was deranged, and but for the intervention of friends, must have closed his days in St. Luke’s, or a work-house.

“ You have seen much of life, and something of the *religious* world ; but when religion is viewed through the medium of any sect of her professors, she will appear, more or less, with false colours and distorted features. Let us contemplate christianity as it is taught by the inspired penman, and we shall possess that which shall bear us out in life and death. The hair is turning grey on my head, my nerves are shaken, my limbs decay in vigour and I have a thousand warnings that I am advanc-

ing fast into the vale of life; such intimations you cannot be without; may we both be warned, and declining all other parts in this noisy, passing scene, may it be our effort to live and die *sincere Christians!* God bless you my dear R—, your good wife, and your old schoolfellow and sincere friend,

“MELVILLE HORNE.

“*Macclesfield, 15th July, 1808.*”

“With a heavy atmosphere oppressing me, a heavy heart aiding it—a light purse, in friendly sympathy with a light head—thus furnished, I am placed to assure my friends, notwithstanding my silence, they have been ever present to my thoughts and foremost in my good wishes. I had nothing pleasant to communicate, consequently, like some of the ancient philosophers, I esteemed silence a virtue.

“The arrival of Mr. Romney without a line of introduction, to be sure, gave me a bit of a twitch for having seemingly neglected his friend Mr. Ryley; but the more I conversed with him, the more he let me into the mind of his travelling companion, the aforesaid Mr. Ryley, and the more confidence I felt that I should readily meet with pardon from one, who, had he been circumstanced like myself,

would be as apt to neglect the application to pen and ink, as I have been. So much for apology. I assure you that Mr. Romney has afforded me no small share of amusement, and, although I very much applaud his gipsy invention, and his delineation of his romantic friend Camelford ; yet, I must candidly say, I take more pleasure in listening to the stories where *he* is more immediately the hero ; and I really think his Lancashire servant, amongst the Welch jumpers, would have done credit to the genius of Smollet. So much for criticism.

“I saw F—— the other day ; he is at present illuminating the hemisphere of Berwick with his astiferous coruscations—can your friend Lubricate beat that ?—I expect he will be here in the course of this blessed sabbath, or to-morrow, on his return to Glasgow. At his benefit there, he played Lord Ogleby, and made Wewitzer, as Canton, carry with him continually a guitar, and every exit F—— made was with a French song, accompanied by the Swiss on his instrument ! He justifies it by a passage from the play, wherein it is mentioned, that Lord Ogleby was heard singing French airs with Canton, under the walnut tree. But I fancy, from that very passage, the author meant to confine his Lordship’s musical abilities to the walnut tree. Besides, I rather think, if two old men were to make themselves so singularly conspicuous in a private house, their

next change would be, into a mad house!—But you know him.

“I was very happy to hear of your success in the presidential chair during the winter; I believe I must turn my thoughts that way myself, for I have not, as yet, concluded any engagement, nor do I know at present, how I am to be disposed of.

“Now, whether you are at Buxton or Liverpool, hang me if I know; for to give up the pleasures of the delightful mountains of Derbyshire!—would be a stretch of privation I am not inclined to give you credit for. So here goes for Buxton. This paper bears the good wishes of myself and Rib, to yourself and Mrs. R —, and believe me truly,

“Your’s,

“ROBT. MANSELL.

“*Edinburgh, 7th Aug. 1808.*

“The Theatre closes Sept. 6th, and there’s a vacation until 21st of November!!! Pleasant enough.”



“*Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Aug. 6, 1808.*

“Dear Sir,

“I have sent the books you directed to me, to the different booksellers, and have, myself been much amused by their perusal. I think it a very proper publication on your own account, and

hope you will reap profit from it; to me, it was most particularly entertaining, because, I am so well acquainted with many of the persons mentioned. To enter into the observations I could make would fill a volume, I shall, therefore, only mention, that I am rather inclined to think the story of Camelford is too highly painted, and, in many instances fictitious. I never read so distressing a narrative as the Dumb Man; and, which makes it more so, it carries truth on the face of it. The great error of your life, was, not accepting the *double* which roused your pride so much; had you done so, I have not a doubt you would have succeeded King, and, at this moment, have been in affluence; but of all the difficulties you have experienced, none are equal to the situation in which the reader is left to suppose you are in at present—this is most cruel—after following you through so many pages, not to find you comfortable at last—as you must have found means to extricate yourself, or how could you have published the book, and lived in the respectable manner I understand you have done.

“Asto S—K—, he is upon a worse scheme than ever you undertook, and has squandered thousands, which I fear the business will never repay him.

“I beg to be most kindly remembered to your wife, and sincerely hope you may both live and en-

joy a comfortable sufficiency together, before the curtain drops over your mental parts. I feel a wish to converse with you, that will never be gratified, I doubt; however, be assured of the sincere regard to both, of

“ Dear sir,

“ Your friend,

“ SARAH HODGSON.”



“ Sir,

I received your very entertaining work, which I trust will yield you considerable profit, as it cannot fail to afford satisfaction to the public.

“ I find you have thought proper to introduce my humble self into the Itinerant; as it was equally unexpected as flattering, I beg your acceptance of the five guinea note inclosed, and wish that happiness and affluence may be your attendant through this rugged path of life.

“ I am Sir,

“ Your humble servant,

“ S. SOLOMON.

“ *Gilead House, 25th July, 1816.*



I had just looked out another bundle of letters

and was in the act of separating the ore from the dross ; when my little monitor and amanuensis, in a tone that savoured of rebellion, informed me, “ that she neither could, nor would copy any more letters ; that if my vanity was not satisfied with what had been already said, she was sure my readers’ patience would be exhausted ; and that I had better make a separate publication, under the title of ‘ Correspondence ; or, Food for Vain Minds ;’ which if printed in a handsome octavo volume, hotpressed — “ a rivulet of text flowing through a meadow of margin ” — and my own head by way of frontispiece, the work, according to the price of a recent publication, would be well worth a guinea ; besides edifying and amusing the public with letters from an heterogenous group of managers and actors, physicians and quack doctors, clergymen of the established church and methodist preachers, swindlers and members of parliament, &c. &c. &c.”

Finding Ann resolute, I compromised the matter by tying up and returning all my papers to their dusty repository, except two letters from Miss Seward, which she agreed to copy, “ more ” she said, “ as a drawback upon my vanity, than from any other motive. But,” continued my wife, “ since you are bent upon exposing yourself, I think Miss Seward’s epistles will be more clearly understood, by introducing your own application ; in short,

giving the four letters in regular succession." To this I agreed, and here they are.

"Madam,

"To have been in the slightest degree noticed by your patronage, I esteem one of the most flattering circumstances of my life; and although my unfortunate situation, for such I must call it, prevented the presumption of enquiry, I have frequently felt a wish to know, whether health, the greatest of all earthly blessings, still renders your life as pleasing to yourself, as it is valuable to those who form your society, and are favoured with your friendship; and although a mercenary motive prompts this intrusion, I hope it will be no improbable conclusion to suppose, that, had I esteemed myself equal to the task, and in a situation of life that would have entitled me to the favour, your correspondence would have been an indulgence of the most grateful kind.

"I take the liberty, madam, of sending the first volume of the Itinerant; the work will be completed in June, when I shall have the honor of calling with it, on my way to London: mean time, if it suit your convenience to procure a few subscribers, it will be an obligation.

"A judgment like yours, will, I doubt not, be as

merciful as it is powerful; not examining with the strict eye of criticism a first effort, which the pressure of many unpleasant circumstances, rendered too premature to bear any marks of perfection.—As my first-born, I commit it to your attention; and, though not the *legitimate offspring* of science or literature, I trust you will find it a *natural child*, whose gambols may serve to relax the imagination after more solid studies.

“Setting every paltry, pecuniary motive aside, I know few circumstances that would flatter my vanity, more than your approbation. In anxious doubt, and with very sincere wishes for your health and happiness, I have the honour to subscribe myself,

“Madam,

“Your obliged and very faithful servant,

“S. W. R——.

“*Liverpool, April 20, 1808.*”



“*Litchfield, May 1, 1808.*”

“Sir,

“Pardon my observing, that it is only those who have celebrity, professional, or literary, that possess a shadow of right to tax their acquaintance and the public, with their own biography.

“ It would be an injury to those who have long assailed, and who yet assail me in this way, and in a more *modest* manner, were my name to appear in subscription to the written life of a person much *less* distinguished than themselves.

“ My income is but competent to my establishment, after a portion has been set apart for subscription to the writings either of my *personal friends* or *authors of note*. If I were to pass that limit, and comply with the request of all who ask my contribution, I should deeply feel the inconvenience, and one-fourth of my annual fortune, would not answer the demands. You, sir, do not even ask my consent to enrol me on your list, but seem to consider me as a subscriber, and expect me to draw upon my acquaintance in support of a claim so utterly unfounded. If I were not to decline doing this, even for the writings of my friends, and for authors of eminence, I should be shunned like a bailiff by my acquaintance here ; since, though they would refuse my solicitation, refusal is always a jar upon the feelings of the refuser.

“ The only comedian I recollect to have known, of the name of R—, was one, who was with a company of Itinerants, in Litchfield, between 1780 and 1790. He seldom, if ever, appeared on the stage through illness and want of theatrical talents,

though a well behaved sensible man. His wife, the daughter of the late Mr. Frodsham manager of the York theatre, was a very pleasing actress. Strongly recommended to me, I sometimes asked herself and husband to dinner. I heard that he died soon after he left Litchfield, and that the widow had married again.

“ Had that Mr. R— been living, my acquaintance with him was too slight, too evidently on his wife’s account, to have justified the liberty in him, which you have taken with me.

“ I am, sir,

“ Your humble servant,

“ ANNA SEWARD.”



“ *Liverpool, May 4, 1808.*

“ Madam,

“ I cannot resist the impulse which actuates me once more to intrude upon your leisure, and to explain away, if possible, what appears to have been an impertinence, very far from my thoughts.

“ I take blame to myself, for not having been more explicit; had my letter been explanatory, perhaps it might in some degree have softened the severity of your reply, and saved me a part of the

mortification I acknowledge to have felt, without having deserved, except in the circumstance of troubling you with my subscription list, for which freedom I beg your pardon.

“ I am by no means, madam, inclined to yield that implicit obedience to the aristocracy of literature, on which you lay so much stress. It is possible, nay, it is a fact, that the biography of an individual, without celebrity in the republic of letters, may force as great a claim on public attention, as that of Johnson, Goldsmith, Savage or Darwin; and with respect to professional celebrity, I call your attention to the memoirs of celebrated theatrical characters—Foote, Lee Lewis, Mrs. Baddely, Mrs. Crouch, &c.—What are they? a farrago of nonsense, Grub-street catch-pennies, that would never have been read, but for the names of the people they were meant to celebrate.

“ The few pleasant and useful hours I spent in your society, will never be effaced from my mind, but my vanity is considerably hurt by finding myself so totally unknown, that, even by *name*, you can only recognize *one R*—, and that one, I have not the smallest ambition to personate.

“ The insignificant individual who has had the temerity to address you, spent a never to be for-

gotten evening at your house in Lichfield; at that period, about the year 1800, he was manager of a company of comedians at Shrewsbury. The following summer he had frequently the honor of seeing you at Buxton; and afterwards endeavoured to procure a licence to perform plays at Litchfield, through your medium, on which business he was honored with the inclosed letter.

“ If these various circumstances recal not the smallest recollection, I have only to grieve and submit.

“ So far, madam, from wishing to trespass on your bounty for the subscription, I meant to have pressed the volumes upon your acceptance, and if they afforded you the smallest amusement, my highest ambition would have been gratified. For the boldness of my presumption in wishing you to recommend the work, I feel ashamed, and again solicit you to forgive, and, if possible forget, the impropriety of the request.

“ I have the honor to be,

“ Madam,

“ Your faithful and obedient servant,
S. W. R——.”

"*Lichfield, May 9th, 1808.*

" Sir,

"I feel at once concerned and ashamed of the involuntary oblivion of my memory ; it was, even in youth perpetually faithless to me respecting *names*. Time, and a long continuance of ill health, have deplorably increased that deficiency. It was in vain that I endeavoured to recollect, on receiving your first letter, having ever known any gentlemen of the Theatre who bore your name, except the person mentioned in my last, and I fancied I might have been misinformed respecting his death, and that, in reality, he was the individual who *then* addressed me. Under that idea, I wrote. I now remember the respectable manager of the company of Comedians at Buxton, and that he once applied for my interest with our corporation, (interest which I never possessed) to obtain for him our *unfrequented* Theatre here—but the name was gone from me past recall. My letter which you inclosed, is as an upbraiding spectre ; it convicts me of a strong error, for which I can only plead that it was not wilful, yet I ask your pardon.

"I am so often ill and incapable of writing, that

my scanty leisure is become utterly incompetent to the claims upon it, which are most oppressively extensive. I look towards my book-case with longing eyes *in vain*: epistolary duties forbid my access to it. If I had subscribed to your book, I should not have had time to explore it.

“As to the inferior examples you plead for your biography, I should think they would operate as *warnings*. Garrick and Foote were first rate people, yet even Garrick was too delicate to stand forth the herald of his own actions.

“I have frequently been urged to write my life, but I never thought myself of sufficient consequence to the public to obtrude upon it with egotistic presumption. It is difficult for any person to speak or write of themselves with grace, and without disgusting their readers.

“If you really think yourself an equal object of attention to the public, as Johnson Goldsmith, Savage, or Darwin, that consciousness must be at least an agreeable, if not a just idea, and I wish experience may *not* shew you its fallacy. Not one however of those justly celebrated men was his own Biographer. The vanity of Cumberland made him guilty of that obvious indelicacy, but it was in some degree recompensed by the spirit of the

composition, and Cumberland is a distinguished, though not an amiable character.

“I remain Sir,

“Your humble servant,

“ANNA SEWARD.”

“Now I have copied thus far to please you” said Ann, “I will transcribe your inclosure to Miss, or rather to Mrs. Seward, to please myself.”

“*Lichfield, January, 31st, 1801.*

“Dear Sir,

“I am sorry to send you another inauspicious reply to your request for leave to bring your company here this spring. Immediately on receiving your letter, I applied to the high bailiff in your behalf. He was out of town, and did not return till yesterday. I received his decided negative too late for that post, or I should not have added to disappointment, one hour’s suspense that could be avoided. The answer came to me through our town clerk, who said, “that from the extreme scarcity of all kinds of provision in this city, and its immense price, the corporation had resolved not to permit any thing Theatric here, except only in the week of the races; that Mr. Diott had desired more than a month ago, that if comedians were to be admitted, of which admittance in times like these he much

disapproved, the Cheltenham company might have the preference, as he was personally acquainted with its manager.

“ I consider every thing like prosperity to be at an end in this country. We have madly cast away every opportunity of obtaining that peace which could alone enable us to meet by importation the exigencies of scarcity, if real, and if artificial, to foil the rapacity, of the land holders, and their oppressive speculations. As our ministers have managed, the poor are perishing, and the middle classes become necessitous. Affluent indeed must be that income, in proportion to the habits of establishment, which does not severely feel the inordinate pressure of the taxes, and the extreme dearth which prevails in every commodity. Hence, all prudent people, in the middle classes of life, abridge their amusements, and in consequence, the sons and daughters of the Theatre, at least of locally fluctuating Theatres, languish in neglect, and I much fear, the times will soon be such, as shall oblige them to seek some other means of livelihood. Lichfield never was a good situation for Players; all who have resided any time amongst us, complained of poverty, misery, and debt; yes, even in prosperous times, when England was great amongst the nations, and full of internal wealth; ere useless and wasted subsidies had exhausted the national

treasure ; ere baffled expeditions, and hopeless invasions, had diminished our granaries, and other sources of subsistence.

“ I remain, with friendly, but unavailing good wishes,

“ Dear Sir,

“ Your obliged servant

“ ANNA SEWARD.”

The public prints say that Miss Seward's letters are on the point of being published ; doubtless that publication will be confined to her correspondence with celebrated characters ; men distinguished either by birth, fortune, or talent. I have not the presumption to suppose she would retain copies of letters to so insignificant a being as myself, and as I conceive every line of Miss Seward's is worth preserving, the reader, if he be of the same opinion, will thank me for rescuing these from oblivion.

CHAP. IV.

"THE TRAVELLERS."

CHERRY.

"He hath a tear for pity, and a hand

"Open as day to melting charity."

"2d PART OF HENRY THE 4th."

By the end of the summer, my first play, "*The Old Soldier*" was finished, and "*The Irish Girl*" in a state of great forwardness. This was the signal for a journey to London, for I *wisely* thought, that during the *run* of the former, I should have ample leisure to finish the latter, of its success I had not the smallest doubt; and nothing occupied my brain but Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden; rehearsals and actors; and lastly, how to lay out the profits in the best way to secure the future comforts of two unfortunates, whose time of life called loudly for repose.

Alas! what poor, weak, short-sighted mortals

we are ! The very means we take to obtain a desired object, often prove the greatest impediment ! Who would have thought, what human wisdom could have foreseen, that the firmest struggles, the most strenuous endeavours to remain stationary, should have been the means of forcing me again to a life of Itinerancy ! But so it was, I leave philosophers and theologicians to determine the cause ; with the effects, by dear bought experience, I am well acquainted.

Of the success of the Old Soldier I again say, and confess my ignorance whilst I am making the declaration, I had not the smallest doubt ; besides, I had business to settle with my publishers ; and never, except impelled by necessity, taking a journey without my better half, we made our little arrangements for a temporary absence, and in November 1808, left Liverpool for the Metropolis.

The horses were harnessed, and three passengers had taken possession of the front seat, ere we arrived at the Inn.

The night was dark and gloomy, but by the glimmer of a horn lantern, I could perceive two men pushing something into the coach, which at that distance bore the appearance of a bag of cotton. "Push cried a hoarse voice." "We can

never push you into the coach," replied the man who carried the light; "or if we get you in, there you may remain, for you'll never be able to get out again."

"Never fear my lad; come, one more shove and the business is done."

My wife next ascended the vehicle, and as I had my foot upon the step, the ostler said, "if the coach be upset, Mr. Romney, you'll be uppermost, for there's a load of flesh in yonder corner, that will ballast it on that side. I warrant me. Such men as he ought to pay double fare, for if six of his weight should ever meet together, no half dozen horses would be able to draw 'em." I was prepared by this speech, and the action which preceded it, for something out of the common size, but not exactly for the entire loss of my seat. This however, was the fact. The dealer in ribbons from Coventry was an epitome of that man of flesh, Mr. Lambert, and fully occupied two-thirds of the seat. Now, no effort of contraction could squeeze a man and his wife into the remaining space, so after much good humoured apology from our weighty inmate, and many laughable observations on *his bulk* and *my sparseness*, I accepted the accommodation of a stool, and thus commenced my journey to London.

In my pilgrimage through life, I have generally remarked, that plumpness and good humour are synonymous. Cheerfulness follows as naturally in the train of a fat man, as deceit in a courtier, or selfishness in a miser; and indeed that may be one cause of his rotundity, as, I believe, lack of thinking is another. A peevish, or studious man is rarely fat; hence we may infer, that ill humour is not a greater foe to happiness, than intense application is to all appearance of good living. I say appearance, for I by no means affirm that literary characters are enemies to good cheer, but that it has not the same effect upon them, as upon "your sleek, smooth-faced fellows who sleep o' nights."

It was too dark to read faces, and the road was too rough to admit of conversation, either with pleasure or safety. But, though we had oral stillness, there was plenty of nasal noise, for the ribbon-weaver's pipes played so loud and constant, that his snore was necessarily confined to a soló, a duet was impossible, had any one been so inclined. The only female in the coach, except my wife, declared "the sleeper was excessively vulgar and ill-bred;" whilst her companion on the left hand, who proved to be an alderman from Chester, vowed "if he had him in his native city, he would indict him for a nuisance, and he was sure the law would bear him out, because no man had a right to disturb the

peace of a neighbourhood, particularly in the night." As no one seemed inclined to answer these remarks, silence again ensued, until the sun rose on a fine frosty morning, and gave me an opportunity of studying the physiognomy of my fellow-travellers. In the female I read peevishness and parsimony; the former, perhaps, not inherent, but arising from the besotted blindness of man, who, overlooking charms, doubtless highly appreciated by their *owner*, had suffered her, at the age of fifty, to retain the mortifying appellation of Miss. Miss Shufflebottom. Shufflebottom! 'tis a strange name. When I had paid our fare, and seen my name placed immediately under Miss Shufflebottom's, I could not help thinking, as I passed down Dale-street, what an infinite variety of singularly odd names an itinerant meets with! This family of the Bottoms is divided into numerous branches and ramifications from the original name, and has given birth to the Sidebottoms, Higginbottoms, Ramsbottoms, and the aforesaid Shufflebottoms. In like manner we may trace other names; for instance, Mr. Cock has given birth to Allcock, Nocock, Badcock, Mycock, Laycock, Raincock, Hitchcock, &c. The names derived from different trades, or handicrafts, may be readily accounted for, but from what could the above originate? I remember, at Totness, in Devonshire, a shopkeeper of the name of Farewell,

and doubtless other travellers have met with Mr. Good-bye.

Some years ago, there were two performers in the Plymouth theatre, whose names were Grace and Virtue; they were either people of no talent, or little probity, for when they took their departure, Mr. Brown, the prompter, with his usual dryness, observed "Grace is strongly recommended, and Virtue is lovely, but I hope we shall never see either of them in our theatre again." But Miss Shufflebottom has led me into a strange digression, involuntarily, I confess; she is no more answerable for the name inherited from her forefathers, than she is for the monosyllable which precedes it, and would willingly lay down both, not merely without regret, but with joy.

Miss Shufflebottom's left hand neighbour, as I said before, was an alderman from the ancient city of Chester. This, together with his name, I learnt from the bookkeeper, and many years' experience had made me a competent judge of the longitude of his head, and the latitude of his heart; the one might have been spanned by an infant, and the other was so contracted, that pilanthropy, benevolence, and the social feelings that bind man to man, and humanity to the brute creation, could find no entrance: we generally feel disgust towards such characters,

but pity ought to be the prevailing passion; for surely no rational creature, had he the choice, would so act his part on this troubled scene, that none should love him living, or regret him dead! But I wish, with my readers, that I could introduce them to my fellow-travellers, without all this animadversion. The fact is, Miss Shufflebottom is alone to blame; I had no intention to deviate out of the beaten track, no design to turn either to the right or the left, till her unfortunate name led me, like a Will-o'-th'wisp, and against my own judgment, to wander through bye ways, till I have nearly lost myself, and tired those who are journeying with the Itinerant through his fourth volume. Our fat friend, from Coventry, requires very little more to be said of him, except that his face was round and smooth, and as handsome as any face can be that lacks expression; good humour sat enthroned in every dimple, and Momus was the deity who presided at his birth.

Having introduced my readers to Miss Shufflebottom, the Chester alderman, and the Coventry ribbon-weaver, I would fain pause awhile, not through fatigue, either of body or mind, but that I may give a few moments to reflection, ere I speak of the fourth passenger, a man who, when living, was the pride, the boast, the glory of his native Liverpool, and by whose death a breach has been

made in society which time alone can heal. His talents, seldom equalled, and scarcely ever surpassed, went hand in hand with his virtue, his benevolence, his meekness, and his charity. His liberality, both as a man and a Christian, were universally allowed; and when it pleased heaven to translate him to that kingdom, where alone goodness like his can be truly appreciated, the poor, who blessed his footsteps, bewailed him as their common father, friend, and benefactor. To the inhabitants of his native town, and neighbourhood, my picture, though faintly drawn, will announce itself; to others, I proudly repeat the name of William Rathbone! the friend of humanity—the enemy of tyrants—and the parent of the poor!

Liverpool may boast, above her peers, of three men whose names will be handed down to posterity as advocates in the great, the glorious cause of constitutional freedom! Men, whose tried virtues, and rare talents, were alone sufficient to save their native place from the curse her infernal traffic deserved at the hands of an offended Deity. When I say, Liverpool may boast *three* such, God forbid I should limit them to so small a number; there are hundreds who feel the sacred flame of liberty, and many of conspicuous note; but *Roscoe*, *Rathbone*, and *Rushton*, I select as men of tried worth, known integrity, and superior talent; who never, to serve

private interest, or court public favour, spoke what they did not think, nor practised what they did not know to be their duty. I strongly suspect that some of my readers, after perusing this leaf, will be tempted to throw the book into the fire ; but let me caution them against it. I do not mean often to launch out into this kind of panegyric, and perhaps should not have done so now, had I consulted self-interest : that has never been my prevailing principle, if it had, I should not, at this moment, be situated as I am.

When the coach stopped at the place appointed for breakfast, the difficulty of extricating our corpulent companion excited some mirth and a great deal of curiosity. The good folks at Knutsford assembled and hailed us with a cheer, which so disconcerted Miss Shufflebottom, that she exclaimed against stage coaches in strong terms, and agreed never again to hazard her feelings in a similar conveyance.

“You are right Ma’am,” replied alderman—never mind his name: “I always trundle up in the mail, but a bit of business at Liverpool brought me this way, because as I could not *incense* my correspondent by letter, I was obliged to go verbally to work, and so was *necessitated* to go in this here coach or wait till to-morrow. But had this matter happened at Chester, I should have taken means to prevent

it; Paul would not have suffered that there hog of a fellow in any of his coaches; if he had, we should have noticed him at license day; you understand me, Ma'am."

The object of this remark was too much engaged in his egress to notice what was said, and the venerable quaker treated it with silent contempt. At length, with the assistance of landlord, ostler, waiters, and coachman, this unwieldy being burst through the door-way, and was welcomed on his landing with shouts and applause. Finding himself on terra-firma, and wiping away the moisture caused by this uncommon exertion, "Now lads," said he, turning to the mob, "what do you think of me? am not I a tight lad? I wish you had every one a good Cheshire cheese my weight, and a barrel of ale as big as me to wash it down." This good-humoured joke, at his own expense, warding off the rude shaft of insult, too often levelled by the hand of ignorance at the unfortunate, caused a hearty laugh; and we were ushered into a neat room, where a comfortable breakfast was rendered still more so by the laughable observations of this fat son of mirth; these relaxed the features of all present, except Miss Shufflebottom; she, good lady, possessed a combination of muscles impenetrable to laughter.

The next stage passed pleasantly, and was rendered interesting by the enlightened and truly philanthropic conversation of the Quaker, who, full of the milk of human kindness, and possessing wonderful intelligence, gave vent to it in a flow of eloquence unequalled.

There is something to me peculiarly interesting—something that commands a strong feeling of respect in the character of a Quaker. They are singular in their habits, but their singularities are most of them amiable. They are the friends of peace, and the very essence of cleanliness. Priestcraft has no power over them. All titles, except that of an honest man, they disclaim. Nonsensical etiquette that causes a useless waste of time, and serves to fill weak minds with foolish self-importance, is with them exchanged for sincerity and plain dealing. They are indeed a very extraordinary people—a small body—little known in the Christian world, except in England and America. Would their principles were wider spread! Then wars would cease, morality flourish, and earth become a little heaven. When seventy thousand of our fellow creatures are dead or dying in the field of battle, methinks I hear the spectator, if he be not a hardened human butcher, exclaim “would to God that all mankind were Quakers.”

At Congleton, as we were seated in a parlour fronting the street, till the horses were changed, a crowd attracted our attention, in the midst of which I observed our venerable friend, seemingly in earnest conversation with the country boors. Upon enquiry, I found this was an annual bear-bait, an amusement highly prized by the enlightened inhabitants of Congleton; and the poor animal then at the stake, who went by the name of Old Tom, had for years been torn and lacerated for the sport of these rural swains; "But this year," added the waiter, in a tone of chagrin, "he has made no fun at all, for the belward is obliged to splice splinters of wood up his hind legs, or he could not stand at all; and besides, part of his nose, and one of his eyes, were torn off last year." Great God! what a heart-rending picture of human depravity is here! A loud shout now drew our eyes to the window, when the first object that met my attention was the Quaker, hustled about by the mob, and endeavouring to make his escape; at the same time a large mastiff was shaking the poor bear, to the great delight of these human brutes. Never in my life did I wish so much for riches and power. Oh, great Creator! can thy thunder sleep? In vain the enfeebled animal sent forth piteous moans; instead of moving compassion, it added to their mirth; till at length a respite was obtained, and the attention of this barbarous crew turned towards——what? The ingenious rea-

der might study long, and never guess—no less an object than our friend the Quaker, mounted on a horse-block, which happened to be close to the scene of action. Although unused to be uncovered at any time, yet his good sense informed him, that having to contend with the most difficult of all characters, ignorance and prejudice, every novelty must be had recourse to: therefore, taking off his hat, his silver hairs, and all-commanding aspect, struck a reverential silence into the beholders. The mastiff was held by the collar, the poor bear crept behind his brutal master, and all eyes were turned towards the horse-block. “Good heaven!” thinks I, “does the worthy man mean to preach? Can he suppose the ears and hearts of beings like these are to be touched by any thing serious at a time like this?” Had I for a moment reflected on the experience, talent, and knowledge of the world, centred in the character before me, I might have supposed that even the strong feelings of his excellent heart could not have stimulated him to encounter insult, and hazard personal safety, unless he had some surer ground to go upon than preaching to a mob of brutal bear-baiters. “What the devil are you at?” cried the man of flesh, “are you mad?” at the same time throwing up the sash, and beckoning the Quaker. The alderman observed, whilst he stirred up a large tumbler of mulled wine, “It’s dangerous to meddle in the country people’s sports and pastimes; as the

great Windham observes, baiting animals makes men good soldiers and sailors ; and I am not decided whether they are not justified by the law——” “ Justified by the devil ! ” exclaimed the rider, with a look of as much contempt as his round, good humoured face could express. Close to our friend on the horse block stood the ostler, with a jug of ale and a tumbler, which gave me a little insight into his plan of proceeding, and from which I began to augur hopes of success. Having waved his hand for silence, which was granted, the mob crowded round, and forgot at the moment, even the object of their cruel sport. ’

“ My lads, and fellow countrymen,” said this great man, “ I am a Quaker, and Quakers do not often drink healths ; but if drinking your’s can add to the good wishes I bear you, I say, here’s all your good healths. (*A shout.*) I see a friend amongst you with a smile on his countenance ; I suppose he thinks I am going to preach ; indeed I am not. I never yet preached, and I think this would be a very improper time to begin. It is true I have a few words to say, which concern us all nearly, and when I have finished, as I have drank your healths, I hope you will drink mine ; for which purpose I have ordered a barrel of ale into the inn-yard, (*a shout*) and I hope you will all partake of it.” “ Thank you, Sir, we’ll go directly, ” was echoed

from every quarter. “ Stop, my friends, I would make a few observations, and then tap the barrel as soon as you please. I remember reading a story when I was a boy, which made a strong impression upon my mind, and it was that recollection which gave me courage to mount this horse-block. Once upon a time, a certain carter possessed a horse of excellent strength, and for years his family were maintained by the exertions of this generous and noble animal. Whilst able to do his work, his master fed him, and indeed took every proper care of him ; but, at length he became old, weak, and feeble, a state, my brethren, we shall all arrive at, if we live, and then we must look for support to our children, and those whom, in our strength we have assisted ; just, as you will say, the poor old horse had a right to look for succour from the master he had served so long and so well. But when the cruel carter found old Dobbin’s strength exhausted, he gave him little food, but many blows ; and one day being unable to drag the loaded cart out of a deep rut, with oaths and imprecations, he took up a stone, and with one blow laid his faithful old servant dead at his feet. Now this, you will say, was cruel and ungrateful ; but mark the consequence, for cruelty never goes unpunished : The carter’s family being deprived of their maintenance by the death of the poor horse, soon became tenants of an alms-house, and the wretch himself died on a dung-

hill, covered with rags and filth. Now the story goes on to say, that in the other world, where crimes meet with a just punishment, (and what can be a greater crime than cruelty?) I say, in the other world the punishment allotted to this miserable carter was, that both he and his horse should return to this earth, and exchange situations; so the driver became the horse, and the horse the driver: and you may be sure, my friends, the driver did not spare him. In vain, at every lash, he supplicated pity; the answer was, "Thou shewedst me no pity when I was thy horse, therefore expect none; I will not spare thee, till thou hast received every lash, and every cruelty thou didst inflict." Now, though this is a fabulous story, it bears an excellent moral; for if it should please Providence, with whom nothing is impossible, to punish us for cruelty to animals, in this way of retaliation, what a dreadful scene shall some of us have to act! the inhuman coachman will become a coach horse, the belward there will become a bear, and be treated with greater cruelty, if possible, than he has shewn towards that miserable animal. To avoid this, my lads, endeavour to turn your minds to exercises more manly, noble, and worthy the pursuits of Englishmen, than exulting at the sufferings of a poor brute tied to a stake, and deprived of the power of self-defence."

Hogarth might have delineated the countenances of the astonished group during this harangue, but words would fail to do them justice. Some smiled, others gaped with out-stretched jaws, whilst several shook their heads, and when the orator ceased, exclaimed "That's very true indeed." But the major part had their eyes on the beer barrel, and as our worthy quaker's sole object was to rescue the bear, for of any good his story would produce, he was hopeless, he gave them no time for reflection, but pointing to the desired object, in a moment the street was cleared, and at the same instant the coachman summoned us to the vehicle, where he told us Miss Shufflebottom was fretting and fuming at the protracted delay.

We had squeezed our fat friend into the coach, followed by the alderman and my wife, and I was ascending the steps, when the report of a gun from the Inn yard struck our ears; and immediately the quaker joined us exclaiming "thank God! thy miseries are at an end." In short, this excellent man had purchased the bear, and to ensure him from future outrage commissioned the ostler to shoot him.

Ah! ye preaching, praying multitude! not that I mean to ridicule your pious propensities; but could you for ceremonies, substitute a little of

the worthy quaker's leaven of liberality—could you for a moment think that God made other animals besides yourselves, whose feelings it is a crying evil to sport with—how much more lovely would you appear in the eye of your benevolent creator ! But alas ! tenderness towards the brute creation is never recommended from the pulpit ; nor the various degrees of cruelty practised hourly in our streets, fields, and villages, which lacerate the feeling heart to describe, ever thought of by the pious, or reprobated by the preacher.

After Miss Shufflebottom had indulged herself with a few un-lady-like observations respecting the cause of our delay, in which she was joined by the alderman, a silence prevailed till we had passed the sixth mile-stone. The quaker seemed buried in thought, the rider's taciturnity was evidently occasioned by reverential awe—for his eyes were constantly fixed on this friend of humanity—and sometimes they appeared to glisten with a generous tear : the silence of the Spinster and Mr. Alderman, was caused by pride and ill humour, and Ann's thoughts, I knew by sympathy, were in the grave of poor bruin. To break the spell in which we seemed bound, I pointed to a ploughman on whom my attention had been some time fixed, and who at that moment was in the act of fondling his horses, and alternately offering each a wisp of hay. " You

see, sir," said I, addressing myself to the Quaker, "all ignorant people are not cruel." "God forbid they should! but you reason from immediate observation only. That man loves his horse, and if you were to strike it, doubtless he would strike you. He has been brought up to esteem the animal by which he gets his bread, such are the prejudices of education; but let him unyoke, and haste to yonder wake, he'll join the busy throng of brutal baiters with as little feeling as the most callous man amongst them; such are his habits. We are all the children of habit, and to those who have the care of first fixing them, we are indebted for our happiness or misery, our virtues or our vices. Had the parent, the nurse, the preceptor, or the preacher, at an early period, informed the minds of the mob we have just left, and imprinted on them a proper sympathy for distress of every kind, think you, they would have rejoiced at the miseries of the poor bear? Oh no! they would have pitied its sufferings, and have exerted every nerve to lighten them. Ignorance is not only the parent of superstition, but of tyranny, oppression, and cruelty; instruct the lower classes, and you will find them as virtuous, as humane, and more generous than those in higher life; for I am sorry to say, and know it by experience, that if an object of distress faints for want of sustenance in our streets, he is immediately succoured by those, who having little to spare, will from that little spare

something, whilst the rich pass by on the right hand and on the left ; so that the good Samaritan is to be met with generally amongst the poor.

“ The poor man alone,
When he hears the poor moan,
Of his morsel, a morsel will give.”

“ Your observation is just, sir,” replied the traveller, “ I know a case in point. Our powder mills were unfortunately blown up, three men lost their lives, and left as many widows, and fifteen children, unprovided for. Every body pitied them ; and several, I amongst others, went round to the opulent neighbours, to see what could be done towards raising a sum for their support. But you will scarcely believe how coolly I was received. Some were denied, others talked of the parish, and the exorbitant sums they paid for poor’s rates ; in short, I could not raise five pounds amongst the rich ; but a subscription was set on foot by the poor, and middling classes, and although no individual subscription exceeded a shilling, they collected altogether above twenty pounds !” “ They had better have kept the money in their pockets for a rainy day,” muttered the alderman, “ what little they could do, was only relieving the parish.” “ Now I think it was relieving the fatherless and the widow,” said the former speaker, “ a kind of virtue corporate bodies are little acquainted with.” Having made what he thought a good hit, his fat sides shook with

laughter, and he looked round for approbation ; whilst the alderman literally became a *Shufflebottom* ; he moved backwards and forwards, examined us all round, to see what effect the joke had produced, and repeating the term “ corporate bodies,” at length exclaimed, “ the only corporation you are interested for, is your own ; if one may judge by its size, you have taken pretty good care of that, if appearances don’t belie you.”

This kind of sparring did not at all suit the Quaker ; it militated against his love of peace and quietness, and fortunately was terminated by Miss Shufflebottom, who appeared to have a violent dread and antipathy to the combustible above-mentioned. “ Speaking of the terrible effects of gunpowder, I think sir,” observed she, “ You said *our* mills. Pray do you travel in that line ?” “ Why madam, I do, and I do not. I am, in fact, a trader in ribbons from Coventry—you know, madam, Coventry is famous for ribbons ; and when the ladies will have nothing to say to me, that is, when they literally send me to Coventry, I veer about and attack the gentlemen with gunpowder.” “ Indeed ! and—do you—travel with samples ?” “ Oh yes, madam, in both lines. I have as beautiful an assortment of ribbons, and as pretty a sample of gunpowder as you would wish to see. Would you like

to look at them?" "Not for the world, sir. There's nothing I dread so much as gunpowder: surely you have none in the coach." "Only a small sample, about a pound, in the seat underneath you. But do not be alarmed, I have travelled eighteen years, and never met with more than one accident, and that may never happen again." "Pray sir, what was it?" "Why, madam, I don't know how it was, but some how the gunpowder took fire, blew off the top of the coach, and killed an alderman, no faith, I believe it was an old woman."

Miss Shufflebottom gave a loud scream, lowered the window, and vehemently insisted upon getting out. We were, at the moment, rattling over the stones, which prevented her cries being heard; and the intreaties of the alderman at length prevailed upon her to resume her seat. "Don't be alarmed; miss," he continued, "at this ridiculous story; the *great* man talks thus indifferently of being blown up, because he's used to it, only look at him." "No, no, madam," subjoined the facetious rider, "don't be alarmed; there's no danger of the gunpowder taking fire, unless it comes in contact with the alderman's nose." At this moment the coach stopped, and the waiter opening the door with more than his usual alacrity, both I and my wooden stool were precipitated into the street; fortunately for me and my readers, my head made a forcible attack upon

the door opener before it reached the pavement, or my entertaining adventures would have ended in the good town of Northampton.

Miss Shufflebottom chose to absent herself from dinner, and the crest-fallen alderman was quite mute. To one, or perhaps both these circumstances, we were indebted for the most intellectual meal I ever enjoyed, and which, alas! can never be repeated. Our sage friend's liberal opinions upon every subject, whether political, philosophical, or theological, breathed a spirit of godlike charity, and more than human moderation; on the latter subject the most determined sceptic would have exclaimed "thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian;" for "truths divine came mended from his tongue." In the midst of a most interesting account of William Penn's first landing in America, the book-keeper entered, being sent by the lady to say, "that unless the barrel of gunpowder was removed, she would relinquish her place, and commence a prosecution against the proprietors." The pretended dealer in combustibles now found he had carried his joke too far; and with good humour peculiarly his own, "he assured Miss Shufflebottom, that far from possessing a *barrel* of gunpowder, he did not possess a single grain, being no ways concerned in vending such inflammable matter; and that the whole fabrication was a harmless jest, for

which he begged her pardon." The lady accepted his apology, but from some cause not explained, chose to wait for another conveyance; and that we might be no further incommoded, the *great* man paid double fare. In due time we stopped at the Golden Cross, Charing Cross; and in parting with our fellow-travellers, I lost sight, for ever, in this world, of the *great*, the *good*, the *virtuous* WILLIAM RATHBONE!—Not far from where I am now writing rests his hallowed dust, and if I am permitted, in the region of spirits, to dwell in his vicinity, my happiness will be complete.

CHAP. V.

"THE MISTAKE."

SIR JOHN VANBRUGH.

" Rude am I in speech,
 " And therefore little shall I grace my cause
 " In speaking of myself."

" OTHELLO."

OH London ! thou wonderful epitome of the world !
 once more I behold thy busy multitudes, and
 though fruitless may be the attempt, I come to make
 an humble offering at the shrine of genius, and join
 in the din and bustle that quickens circulation, even
 at the sight.

By the recommendation of a friend, we soon
 found ourselves comfortably settled, at No. 15, Nor-
 thumberland-street ; where an easy rent, joined to
 great suavity of manners in our sensible, well-in-
 formed hostess, and her lovely daughter, rendered
 the lodging every way desirable. It was near the

Park, and not far from the Théâtres; where I fondly imagined great part of my business would lie; its outward appearance was respectable, and the inward accommodations excellent. Ann soon arranged our wardrobe and other little matters, preparatory to a winter campaign; and in one day we were as much at home, as if seated in our little parlour at Liverpool.

My first business was to wait upon my publishers, Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, in Fleet-street, where I had the pleasure to find the sale of the *Itinerant* had equalled my most sanguine expectations. Thus far all was well. Coming down the Strand, I encountered my old friend Dowton, whom I had never seen till the preceding summer at Liverpool, since our adventure at Lyme in Dorsetshire.* His cheerful, honest face expressed both pleasure and surprise at the meeting, and, hearing Ann was the partner of my journey, he engaged us to dinner on the following day; where neatness and plenty graced his hospitable board, unaccompanied by extravagance, or a shadow of ostentation. As there was no company besides ourselves, except Mrs. Denman, a charming lively widow, whose husband I had known when we were both members of Mr. S. Kemble's company at Newcastle, I opened my

* Chap. 18, Vol. II.

views in coming to London, and the hopes I entertained from my dramatic efforts. Dowton in a friendly manner cautioned me against being too sanguine; since, to his certain knowledge, there had been pieces of merit, in the hands of the Drury-lane manager for years unnoticed, and never likely to appear before the public. One he particularized, called the "House of Mourning;" written by Mr. Leigh, a particular friend of his.*

Dowton's relation acted as a salutary check upon my too lively imagination, though I could scarcely have credited testimony less authentic. That new pieces, when successful, bring money to the treasury, is a fact beyond contradiction; and how a manager, not much gifted with fortune's favours, can be so much his own enemy as to neglect the main spring on which his prosperity hangs, is an enigma I cannot solve. Some people would be apt to call it jealousy, because he is himself a dramatic writer; but that, no one who knows Mr. Sheridan, will for a moment give credit to. He is as much superior to his contemporaries as an author, as he is above the mean, contemptible passion of envy. Then to what are we to attribute this backwardness

* This piece made its appearance, after the burning of Old Drury, at the Lyceum Theatre, under the altered title of "Grieving's a Folly."

to patronize and encourage merit? Solely, I believe, to his unfitness for the station of a theatrical manager; with whom, in general, feeling, generosity, delicacy, nay even common justice, are sacrificed, to promote self-interest, and accumulation. What but avarice could tempt John Kemble to degrade the stage, of which himself and family are such bright ornaments, by the introduction of horses? whose wonderful sagacity cannot be too much admired, whilst kept in their proper sphere; but who ever thought—who formerly *dared* to make so odious a comparison, as now will naturally occur to every one, a comparison between the first national theatre in the world, and a tumbling, horse-riding, rope-dancing circus! Astley has now as much cause for triumph as the Covent Garden managers have for humiliation, did not self-interest counteract it; for what, in fact, have they done, that had not been previously surpassed at the amphitheatre? Could a stream of water be procured, we should, doubtless, have the amusements of Sadler's Wells, added to Astley's; and then, by converting the pit into a circus, and John Kemble exhibiting as an equestrian, the royal theatre of Covent Garden might defy any other in the known world for variety, elegance, excellence, and *scorn*!

What but self-interest could tempt Mr. Elliston to sacrifice his rare endowments, and unrivalled ta-

lents, at the circus in St. George's Fields? It is true, he has abolished horse-riding, and dignified his place with the name of "The Surrey Theatre," but what of that? the pieces represented, are regular dramas, degraded! devoted! lost! for I trust the managers of the royal theatres, whatever be their errors, will have too much pride to advertise the Bold Stroke for a Wife, the Beaux' Stratagem, &c. after their exhibition at the Surrey theatre.

I had only once the mortification of seeing Mr. Elliston perform at this place; it was in the Beggar's Opera—by the bye, that is a piece well enough calculated for *St. George's Fields*—and I was any thing but amused. I can scarcely paint my feelings during the exhibition; they were a mixture of regret, disgust, and pity. I regretted to see Elliston any where, but where he is always seen with admiration, in a regular Drama, at a regular Theatre. I was disgusted with seeing the Hero of such a piece, with so few pretensions; for if the representative of Captain Macheath is not a first rate singer, what is he?—and I was filled with pity, because I really thought Elliston both looked and acted, as if he was ashamed of the business, and of himself; I fancied he had entered unadvisedly upon the task—was sorry for it—but once involved, there was no extrication, at least for that season.

I see by the papers, Mr. Hill has since succeeded to the part.—In his hands Macheath will be what the author designed him—a singer.

But I have made a strange excursion from my friend Dowton's hospitable Dinner Table, or rather from Mr. Sheridan, for Dinner being over I had no intention to return thither. I think I said Mr. Sheridan, the great Orator, the consistent Statesman, was unfit for a Theatrical manager; at least, if he be fit, some that I have the misfortune to know, are very unfit. He is too indolent for his own interest, too easy to cope with turbulent and unruly spirits; for in every class of society, there are such; too polite to wound the feelings of any one, and too full of the milk of human kindness, to tyrannize over those who have no choice in their appeal against despotism, but the loss of subsistence. So much does the love of indolence triumph over interest in this great genius, that I am assured from undoubted authority, he has several Dramatic pieces in hand, the least mature of which, a few hours from his ready pen would bring to perfection.

No class of society equal the children of Thespis in friendliness and hospitality. I am sure I have reason to say so; for with one or two solitary exceptions, all whom I had the pleasure of knowing at

either of the Theatres, were kind, attentive and obliging; at each of their houses we were welcomed with a freedom and ease of manner, peculiar to the people, amongst whom I think it an honour to rank; and before which, empty ceremony and cold hearted etiquette must bow their heads. By the bye, Mr. Munden, whom I had been acquainted with, years previous to my knowledge of the others, and had been occasionally his manager, (perhaps some will say that was the very reason, but I am sure in that capacity he had no cause to complain of me) when we accidentally met, would say, "when will you come?" But that was no invitation. Had we been upon those familiar terms, Kentish Town was too far off to go upon speculation, for any man not absolutely in want of a dinner, and to such I believe Mr. Munden would never have said, even as much as he did to me.

On our first visit to my friend, T. Dibden, I mentioned my play of the Old Soldier, originally designed for Covent Garden Theatre, and my ignorance of the best mode of presenting it; when he very kindly, not only undertook to deliver the manuscript, but through his interest with Mr. Harris, to get me an immediate answer. This was doing the business, as I thought effectually. The Comedy would be read—approved—put into rehearsal—and my fortune hereby secured beyond a

possibility of doubt; because built on a foundation as lasting as my intellect.

Elate, and full of expectation, I lost not a moment in forwarding my Comedy to him, whose voice alone, I conceived, would stamp its value. Meantime, I was far from giving myself up to indolence or dissipation. My literary efforts in conjunction with Ann, who justly laid claim to her full share in the *Irish Girl*, were pursued with avidity; hope sweetened our mental labours, and gave relish to an employment pleasant in itself, and doubly pleasant, since it promised ultimate independence to two beings, long buffeted by adverse fortune, and arrived at a period of life, when nature requires rest, and looks for peace and tranquillity.

In less time than I could possibly have expected my MS was returned to Mr. T. Dibdin^u, with the following note:

“ Dear Dibdin,

“ I have read the inclosed comedy, with much attention—there is so much of good in it, that I am really sorry to say, on the whole I cannot think it would succeed in representation.

“ Yours very truly,

“ F. HARRIS.”

“ *Thursday Morning.*”

On reading Mr. Harris' note, my disappointment far exceeded my mortification, because the former I was not prepared for, and the praise bestowed was an ample salvo for the latter.

But I could not without another effort relinquish the hopes of seeing my Old Soldier brought forward, and therefore wrote myself to Mr. Harris, requesting he would candidly point out the faults, and I would cheerfully undertake any corrections. or alterations, his judgment should dictate.

I was not kept a moment in suspense, for the return of my messenger brought the following.

"Mr. Harris presents his compliments to Mr. Romney, assures him that he has not sufficient leisure or ability to comply with his request."

"Great Malbro' Street, Jan. 12, 1809."

Thus were all my air-blown bubbles destroyed in a moment, at least those which originated in the Old Soldier. Yet so blindly partial are we to the offspring of our own brains, that I rather chose to call Mr. Harris' judgment in question, than to allow faults in the composition of my play. Time however has told a different tale; it has convicted me of vanity and ignorance; for on the representation of this comedy afterwards in Manchester, I found

of a truth, that the play was upon the whole a very bad one; that it had, as Mr. Harris with great judgment observed, much good matter in it, but that it must be entirely new modeled, and undergo a thousand alterations before it was fit to face a London audience. The most effective comic scene is between two very opposite characters, who fancy each other mad; this I was repeating to Mr. Crisp, manager of the Chester Theatre, when he burst forth into an immoderate fit of laughter, and exclaimed, "Why this is a downright plagiarism; your great scene, as you call it, is taken practically if not literally, from the Budget of Blunders."

"Rather say, vice versa, if there be any plagiarism in the case, which I cannot take upon me to say, never having seen the piece you mention. My scene was written three years ago, and subject to the perusal of those, who with more art than generosity or delicacy, might steal my ideas, and convey them to the author of the Budget of Blunders; or it would be more liberal to suppose us both pregnant of the same thought, and when brought to light scarcely to be distinguished, except by the dress.

My last hope now rested on the Irish Girl, which was at length finished, and delivered to the acting manager of Drury Lane Theatre, as the medium through which it might reach the hands of Mr.

Sheridan. Three of the parts were unfortunately written expressly for Mr. Elliston, Mr. Dowton, and Mrs. Jordan; I say unfortunately, because had I presented it to Mr. Harris immediately upon his refusal of my other play, I have the most unquestionable reason to think it would have been brought forward this season; whether it would have succeeded is another question. But week after week it remained in the hands of Mr. Wroughton. Mr. Sheridan rarely came to town, and seldom visited the theatre; Mr. Thomas Sheridan was ill, and not to be troubled upon business; my impatience and fretfulness were matters that interested nobody but ourselves; and a play more or less was no object to the Drury Lane Committee, since they were usually pestered with thirty or forty during the season, not one of which perhaps was honoured with a reading. This I was ignorant of at the time, or I would have reclaimed my MS and immediately acted, as I was afterwards compelled to do.

During this feverish period, I had however intervals of pleasure, if not happiness. Shortly after our arrival in town, I received the following note from Mr. Matthews of Drury Lane Theatre.

“ My dear Romney,

“ I am afraid you will think I have neglected you. I have been out of town the

whole of last week, and very dull I should have been, but for your pleasant and ingenious book; many thanks my good friend for the great amusement it afforded me.

“ Will you and Mrs. R. dine with me on Tuesday or Wednesday? fix your day and let me know. With best wishes to Mrs. R. in which Mrs. M. joins, I am yours very truly.

“ C. MATTHEWS.”

“ 50, *Great Russel Street*,
“ *Sunday.*”

Mr. Mathews is too generally known and respected in London, to require the aid of my weak pen; but as this book will probably be read where he is unknown, the following particulars may not prove wholly uninteresting, and I think the knowledge of talents so unique, cannot be too widely spread. We shall not dwell upon his character either as a man, or an actor, though both are held in very just estimation; because then my readers would have cause to expect the public and private characters of all my theatrical friends; and as I have no intention to undertake a general biography, it might appear invidious to panegyrize some, and be totally silent respecting others. But Mr. Matthews is a character in whom such a fund

of rational entertainment exists, as I believe can be found in no other man breathing.

There are people perhaps who possess the talent of mimicry and ventriloquism in an equal degree, and if I could have said nothing more of the gentleman in question I should have been silent; his is not barely an imitation of voice, or manner, or both; there is a genius, a mind, in every thing he attempts. Whether it be a simple story, where only one or two people are concerned, or little dramas, of which he has many, involving ten or a dozen, the dialogue is so spirited, the sentiments so natural, and the language so appropriate, that the most accurate ear is deceived. You not only hear what the different persons say, but what they do, the most trivial circumstance escapes not this great delineator; in a word, the delusion is so great, and the performance altogether so eccentric, that his society is courted by people of the first rank and consequence; but greatly to his praise be it recorded, he never exhibits his wonderful talents for pecuniary profit, nor accepts an invitation, where he feels conscious that he is invited merely to amuse, or according to a vulgar saying, to be "the fiddle of the company."

The dinner party in Great Russel Street was composed of our hospitable host and his charming wife, Mr. Bannister, Mr. Dowton, and our two

selves; an assemblage large enough for cheerfulness, and not too many for comfort. To those who know Mr. and Mrs. Matthews, I need not say the welcome was flattering, the dinner excellent, and served with neatness and elegance. By the bye, when we first sat down to table I lost sight of our fair hostess, and was on the point of enquiring, "if, we should not be honoured with her company?" when I accidentally discovered her peeping over the breast bone of a turkey, the largest and finest bird of the kind I ever saw. An observation of this sort, led to its history; and proved beyond a doubt, that the fowl was bred and born in Yorkshire, that when killed and trussed, it weighed eighteen pounds, and was sent by its owner, a free-will offering to Mr. Matthews, just in time for his twelfth day's dinner. After a moderate circulation of the glass, the gentlemen prepared for their several duties at the theatre, whither I accompanied them; and after the play we returned to Great Russel Street, with a small, though powerful re-inforcement, consisting of Sir John Carr, a popular writer, Mr. Leigh, the author as before mentioned, of "Grievings a folly," Mr. Theodore Hook, son of Hook the composer, and author of Tekeli, &c. and Mr. Holland of Drury Lane Theatre. Here was a party of choice spirits, which promised an evening of intellectual enjoyment, and the promise was made good. Matthews

was the life and soul of whim, every one contributed, as far as their powers would allow, to the general quota of amusement, but young Hook shone as a comet whose coruscations the unchangeable order of nature permits not to appear in our horizon above once in an age; indeed, I never in this country, heard of a person possessing like talents; we read of them in Italy under the name "Improvvisatori," that is, people who sing extempore. This gift, for I can call it nothing else, Mr. Hook commands in a surprizing degree; give him one, two, or three subjects, no matter how many, or upon what heads they turn, and he sings ten, a dozen, or twenty verses, to a common jig tune, without any gross errors in the rhyme, and much point in the matter. The subjects given him this evening were twelfth day, which we were then celebrating, and the new comedy of Man and Wife, which Matthews, Downton, and Holland, had just been performing for the second time. The circle of course laughed and applauded, but I could do neither. I was literally bereaved of speech and motion; and when the song ended, no argument could persuade me that it was an original effusion: whereupon Matthews said, "Come Hook, convict Romney of incredulity." Without a moment's deliberation, the songster recommenced; with added spirit he addressed an appropriate verse to each individual, concluding with

me, whom he convinced, both against my will and judgement, that he possessed a talent unknown in this country, and unsurpassed in any other.

This evening we had an additional proof of the wonderful powers of imitation possessed by Matthews. There was a man of the name of Knapp, formerly a respectable member of Society, and a tolerable actor; but from idle, dissipated habits, he was now become a sort of travelling mendicant, collecting from the sons and daughters of Thespis, contributions towards the support of his necessities, real or pretended.

In the early part of Dowton's theatrical career, as mentioned in the second volume of the Itinerant, he and I, were in a company with this person; and he frequently applied to the Drury Lane Green Room for pecuniary aid, through the medium of his old acquaintance Dowton, by whose means, and indeed principally from his own pocket, this lazy loungeur was enabled to sojourn several weeks in London, although every supply was obtained under a pretext of conveying him to some country engagement. At length his applications became so numerous, that extensive as Dowton's liberality was, and no man's can be more so, he became tired of affording relief to one who had lost all sense of duty towards himself, and the very name of Knapp threw him

into a frenzy; for though one of the best natured creatures in the world, Dowton is at the same time one of the most irritable; and the disgust he felt at the frequent calls of this man, generally in a state of ebriety, proved an excellent subject for Matthews, and the Green Room was often kept in a roar of laughter, from the supposed approach of Mr. Knapp.

But to return to our supper friends. The cloth was drawn; Matthews had given some of his excellent stories, in his best style, and Dowton's round, good-natured face, exhibited a full participation of this feast of Momus; when the servant announced a person who wished to speak with him.

“With me! with me!” cried Dowton. “Who is it, and what can he want with me at this time of night?”

“He is a very suspicious looking man,” replied the servant, “shabbily dressed, and I think intoxicated”

“Why did he not send his name?” enquired Dowton.

“He did Sir. He says you are an old friend, and know him well. His name is *Knapp*.”

To describe Dowton's countenance is impossible. Passion deprived him of articulation ; he sputtered and stormed, and stamped, and was on the point of running down stairs, with a fixed determination to kick Knapp into the street, when Matthews interfered; "He could not," he said, "permit the poor man to be inhospitably treated in his house, and would himself endeavour to get rid of him." Dowton now gave full vent to his passion. "The scoundrel," exclaimed he, as he paced the room, "Am I to be haunted to death by this prince of paupers? The d——nd rascal! not content with picking my pocket, exposes me to all my friends, and follows me wherever I go ; but I'll stop him ! I'll apply to a magistrate."

A noise on the stairs, gave us reason to suppose that Mr. Knapp was forcing his way to the Dining room, and we could plainly distinguish the following dialogue.

Matthews. "Really Knapp I wish you could be persuaded to go home. Dowton is not here you may depend upon't."

Knapp. "My dear fellow I know you wish me well, but my friend Dowton appointed me to meet him here, to receive a subscription he meant to set on foot after supper. So pray let me go up, for I .

must see him." At the word subscription, Downton foamed with rage ; but as Matthews had denied his being in the house, he restrained himself, and the dialogue proceeded.

Matthews. " Mr. Knapp you must give me leave to be master of my own house, and I insist upon your going down stairs."

Knapp. " My dear fellow dont be positive. I am going to my engagement in the morning, and my friend *Dow* owes me a trifle of money, which I must have."

" You lie you scoundrel !" exclaimed Downton unable to contain himself any longer. " I owe you money you ungrateful vagabond? you—you—you" In a proxism of rage, which deprived him of utterance, he would have run down stairs, if we had not prevented him.

Knapp. " Ah ! his voice ! I knew he was here ! *Dow*, my dear friend, I must, and will shake hands with you."

Here a struggle took place on the stairs followed by blows, at length Matthews exclaimed " foul play ! foul play !" Downton now broke from us vociferating " let me come at him ! I'll teach the

beggarly scoundrel to follow me!" But judge what was the general astonishment, when we rushed out, followed by Mrs. Matthews with a light, to find Dowton collaring Matthews, and that Mr. Knapp had never been upon the spot at all.

Our evening only ended at three in the morning, and in London, 'tis difficult to break up a party even at that late period. The hours after supper are so joyous, that time flies imperceptibly, and without the aid of intoxication, the spirits are exhilarated, and the imagination kept alive, to the utter exclusion of sleep, or even weariness. This was one, of many equally pleasant evenings, we passed in Great Russel-street, and I have been thus particular in describing it, because I do not mean to recur to the subject; but after thanking Mr. and Mrs. Matthews for their friendship, politeness and attention, take my leave of them, unless some unexpected circumstance should arise, previous to the close of my memoir, in which they are immediately concerned.

I have in a former volume, mentioned with respect and gratitude, my guardian, the late Sir Thomas Heathcote, of Hursley Lodge near Winchester; his father, and my maternal grand-father were brothers. The present Sir William I have no personal knowledge of, but having once politely answered a letter written by the Reverend Mr.

Crane on my behalf, wherein, he promised to exert himself in conjunction with Lord Macclesfield, for my interest (unfortunately his lordship paid the debt of nature very shortly afterwards) I determined to wait upon him, and by that means introduce to his notice the only descendant of his cousin Mary. But I had another motive ; my mother, had a number of half-brothers and sisters, who if living were nearly related to myself ; one in particular, whose picture, together with my dear mothers, the late Sir Thomas H. made me a present of. His name was Holworthy, and I believe he was a counsellor. The others bore the name of Heathcote.

To gain some knowledge of these relatives, I could form no plan so plausible, as to procure an interview with the present Baronet. Accordingly I dispatched a note, wherein I made myself known, explained the motive of my request, and followed it up the next morning by knocking at his door in St. James's-square.

Ah ! pride of rank !—ah ! pride of fortune ! eternal foe to good fellowship, brotherly love, and christian-like philanthropy ! what a difference—what a line of demarcation dost thou draw, between creatures equal in the eye of their creator, who admits of no distinction but what virtue or vice may create. That a monosyllable preceding a man's

name, should cause an averted eye, when, perhaps, if the matter were enquired into, the very means by which his ancestors acquired that privilege, would be found pregnant with mischief, and covered with disgrace.

If, as 'tis probable, we enter a future state with our present dispositions, what will the proud and dignified tyrant feel, on finding a benevolent blacksmith received into the heavenly mansion, whilst his pompous Peership is detained at the door, for want of proper credentials.

By these reflections, my reader will augur no good from this attempt to claim acquaintance with the great; I was led into them from having frequently been *galled*, and like the Poets *Jade* I cannot help *wincing*.

At the time appointed, I gave an independent rap at the great man's door, stifling as well as I could every expectation of indignity, and for the credit of human nature, hoping that the son might be the prototype of his worthy father.

Having announced my name, a person out of livery ushered me into an handsome room, where, for a few minutes I paced the carpet with as much pride perhaps as the man who owned it, but, thank God! of a far different complexion.

At length, a door from the adjoining room opened, and Sir William made his entrée. In years he appeared about sixty five, slovenly in his dress; cold, inanimate, and formal in his manner; in short, the *tout ensemble* struck me, as possessing all the disgusting qualities I had anticipated. I do not pretend to say, such was his general character, but so he conducted himself towards me. I bowed with respectful dignity, and enquired "if he had received a note I did myself the honour of writing." What a strange thing is life! what a scene of hypocrisy we are obliged to pursue! unless we lie daily, nay hourly, we shall be kicked out of society. Mr. Insolvent meets Mr. Docket the attorney, and with an hearty shake of the hand hopes he is well; then with increasing interest enquires after Mrs. and the Master, and Miss Docket's, when at the same time, he cares little about the welfare of the latter, and heartily wishes the former at the D—l.

Sir William "had received my note—entertained some distant recollection of my mother—but with respect to the information I required, concerning the other branches of my grandfather's family, I could not have applied more unfortunately, he having very little knowledge of his own connections."

After this declaration, I could no longer be sur-

prised at my reception. If a man does not know his own relations, if he is thus coldly indifferent about his own family, no wonder he should behave with less than politeness to the poorest of them.

The Baronet had nothing further to say, except some silly observations about the weather, and naturally supposing my absence would be agreeable, I made my bow. "Would I had been horse whipped," I mentally exclaimed as I descended the steps of this proud man's dwelling, ere I had thus degraded myself! what a fool! what an idiot was I to subject myself to such treatment! not even ask me to be seated! External appearances, as far as regarded dress, were certainly in my favour, and I required nothing from him, but civility and good manners; then why this contumely? The reason is obvious, I was a poor relation, and he knew it.

My cogitations were so profound, and my eyes so intently fixed on the ground, that I ran against two gentlemen, who were lounging arm in arm round the square, and I suppose so deeply engaged in conversation, that they as little observed my movements as I had done theirs. I was awakened from my reverie by a rosy gilled son of good living exclaiming, "My dear sir! you had like to have run us down." "And if he had" replied the other, who was an uncommonly large man, very shabbily

dressed, "the disgrace would have been all our own; we should keep a better look out, and not run into the enemies teeth."

I of course made an apology, and whilst so doing, had a strong, an unconquerable prepossession, that the first speaker was Mr. Sheridan. I had never seen that great statesman, nor any thing to my knowledge, that bore his resemblance; but I had heard him described, and the description announced the man. But who could his companion be? dressed in a thread bare, light blue coat, formerly ornamented with black buttons, but several of the molds had deserted their covers, which hung in tattered disconsolation, as if bewailing their loss. In hearing Mr. Sheridan described, his historian certainly would not omit his numerous and complicated involvements. This circumstance no sooner occurred, than his tattered companion was identified as a creditor, whom nothing but this condescension in the parliament man could appease. I had settled this in my own mind, and was revolving on the miseries of debt, which I know from woeful experience, and the indignity even our legislators are subject to in consequence; when a servant in livery came out of the house before which I was standing; (for I remained rooted, as it were to the spot, where Mr. Sheridan, and his inflexible creditor left me,) his face bore the stamp of good humoured intelligence,

and pointing to the object of my enquiry, I asked if the gentleman on the right hand was not Mr. Sheridan? the party coloured gentleman replied, as I expected, in the affirmative, adding "a great man sir, and a wise man, they say he has every sense but one."

"Pray what is that?"

"The sense to keep himself out of debt."

"That indeed would be very desirable. Do you know the person he is walking with?"

"Oh yes sir, he is a well known character."

"Indeed! what business is he?"

"Sir!"

"Is he a wine merchant, or a horse dealer?"

Had this fellow borne the common stamp of his trade, had he been a lazy, lounging, impudent serving man, he would have laughed in my face, but he only smiled, and with well bred civility replied, "I see sir you are a stranger; the gentleman you very naturally mistake for a tradesman, is his Grace the Duke of Norfolk!" and bowing, he proceeded on his way.

It seemed as if St. James's square was destined to be a scene of nothing but mortification. My cousin of Buckingham's ill-breeding, and ignorance of the common forms of civility due from man to man, or, if he likes it better, from one gentleman to another, for I make no distinction between us, he shall either be a man, or I a gentleman, had caused two emotions in my breast, hatred and pity; I hated *myself*, for *condescending* to wait upon him; and I pitied *him*, that education and an intercourse with well bred people, had not taught him better manners and more feeling towards one whose grandfather boasted the same sire that his did.

I was endeavouring to account for the pride of man upon rational principles; for which purpose, my perception of human nature, and general knowledge of the world were invoked; when I found, to my extreme mortification, that I had not even experience enough to distinguish, by intuition, a duke from a horse dealer; or to know the difference, by my optical organs, between the first subject in the realm—not royal—and a vender of wines. I have all my life prided myself upon reading characters, but if his grace will pardon this palpable error, I promise never, in future, to judge of a man by his coat.

CHAP. VI.

MORE DISSEMBLERS BESIDES WOMEN.

MIDDLETON.

“ YOU need not tell me,” said Ann, “ whether Sir William Heathcote resembles his father ; I read the contrary in your mortified countenance ; but, tho’ not blessed with the mild benignity of Sir Thomas, he was polite of course.”

“ If a stranger, of even *mean* appearance, were to wait upon me about business, *should* I, Ann, or should I *not*, ask him to take a chair ?”

“ Certainly, you would. But what mean you ? Surely Sir William could not keep you standing !”

“ O yes, he *could*—and, what’s more to the point, he *did*.”

“ Well, well, never mind : the worst you can say of him is, that he does not understand the common forms of politeness. At any rate, he gave you the information required ?”

“No, he did not. In that respect he overstrained politeness, as much as he fell short of it in the other. He is too coldly well bred to know any thing of his uncle Samuel Heathcote’s descendants ; and pretended to be so ignorant as to suppose my mother only a natural child of the said Samuel. But his father knew better, and so did his grandfather, whose kind and affectionate letters fully avow the relationship, as do those of Lady and Miss Drake, and likewise Lady Jane Stanley, who addresses her as Miss Heathcote.”

Dinner interrupted the defence of my mother’s legitimacy ; and as we were taking a glass of wine, Ann resumed the conversation. “Come, having swallowed your passion with your dinner, favour me with your conversation in St. James’s square, verbatim. Sir William was cool, you say.”

“Cool ! the frozen regions of Lapland are not half so frigid. But it is passed, and I’ll endeavour to forget it.”

“Not till you have poured it into my ear.”

I then recapitulated the ten-minutes’ conversation between Sir William and myself, which I saw mortified Ann, although she endeavoured to hide it ; but when I adverted to my casual view of Mr.

Sheridan and his Grace of Norfolk, and related my dialogue with the footman, her good humour was perfectly restored, and by mutual agreement the proud Baronet was banished from our conversation.

One day, after a plentiful dinner with my friend Emery and his lovely wife, I expressed a wish, to be introduced to a circle hitherto unknown to me, except by name.

There is no class of my fellow-creatures, from the highest to the lowest, I have not felt a wish to obtain some knowledge of, for the purpose of becoming as much acquainted with human nature in her various bearings as fell within the scope of my observation and capacity.

Although the system of prize-fighting cannot be justified on any principle, moral or human, yet I am, persuaded, from conviction that the art of fair and manly self-defence every man ought to be master of. It is a much more harmless, useful and justifiable mode of attack, than those deadly weapons, the sword or pistol; besides, thank God! they are not always at hand, and where an assault is to be repelled, or an injury resented then and there, an arm not noted for muscular strength, if supported by science, may amply redress itself.—Several circumstances in the course of my life have

so truly convinced me of this, that, had I male children, pugilism should form part of their education. The following adventure, which occurred only last evening, will, I think, amongst many others, bring the point to demonstration.

The gallery of the Opera-house, whither I strolled to hear an overture, being remarkably empty that evening, I entered into conversation with a lady and gentleman on the seat before me, by asking the former her opinion of the performance? "Why, really, Sir," replied she, with much gentle sauvity, "not at all; but perhaps it may be owing to my ignorance of the language; and I rather think that must be the case, because I have occasionally sat near people who seemed to relish it very highly."

"Then they were foreigners," subjoined the gentleman, "no Englishmen or women, if they speak honestly, can be pleased with a thing that sets the understanding at defiance. Even their fine Italian singers, who, to our shame be it spoken, are in the receipt of a princely income, though they may occasionally surprise us with the rapidity of their execution, leave no impression on the feelings. Give me a simple ballad from Mrs. Jordan, Mrs. Bland, or Mrs. Liston, before all the squallentis that ever were imported."

I never was at an Italian opera before, and if it was not for the honour of the thing, I wish I had not come now ; and this being my first appearance, shall also be my last.

“ Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon,” said the lady, “ otherwise your taste will be called in question, and you will be voted one of the *Cannaille*.”

“ Let them vote me any thing but an admirer of the Italian opera, and I shall be content.”

“ But though the opera does not seem to meet your wishes,” said I, “ perhaps the ballet may not be so unfortunate.” “ Why look ye sir, I’m John Bull every inch of me, and think English dancing quite good enough for an English audience. Why should our own islanders be set at nought, when little Gayton, there she is, God bless her ! shews us plainly that they can be as active, and as elegant as ere a Mademoiselle or Signora of them all. But come, the curtain has dropped upon their foolery, so if you please we’ll depart.”

I was preparing to say “ Good Night,” after handing the young lady down stairs, when her brother, with the pleasant freedom of an old acquaintance, pressed me to take a sandwich in St. James’ street, and, as his sentiments, as far as they had been communicated, agreed with mine, I accepted

his invitation with the same frankness with which it was made. The female between us, we proceeded along Pall Mall; and turning up St. James's street, two men apparently in a state of intoxication, reeled out of an entry, and attempted to seize hold of the lady, who at that moment was unguarded on the right hand, her brother being a few paces in the rear. The street, as far as we could distinguish, was unoccupied, not even the voice of a watchman interrupted the solemn silence; but the moon shone with resplendent lustre, and my new friend, alarmed by his sister's screams, with the swiftness of a feathered mercury, flew along the pavement, and with one blow laid the foremost of our assailants in the kennel. I was the more surprised at this, because his stature did not exceed five feet, and from the view I had of him, I was not prepared for uncommon strength. Our enemies were seemingly tall, raw boned coal heavers, and though one of them was for the moment rendered incapable, our case appeared so desperate, that to the ladies cries, I added a call for the watch; but my companion, nothing daunted, bade me take care of his sister, and fear nothing; for "continued he, if I cannot manage such rascals as these, I deserve to be d—d." The second ruffian, seeing his fellow on the ground, resumed his sobriety, and aimed a blow at me, but in so clumsy a manner, that I not only avoided it, but preserved my fair charge from

harm ; on which our little champion rushed forward, received the blow on the point of his elbow, and returned another in the pit of the stomach, which so staggered the wretch, that he reeled several paces, and finally tumbled headlong into an area, at least three yards deep. What I have employed so many words in relating, was the work of a moment ; having taught his foes to bite the ground, our skilful champion seized hold of his sister's disengaged arm, and not suffering the grass to grow under our feet, we arrived in safety at his house.

This anecdote will I think establish the usefulness of pugilism ; had my friend been as little knowing in the science as his adversaries, very dreadful might have been the consequences, because might, in that case, would have overcome right ; unless the fellows would have had patience to wait till he ran home for his sword ; and then indeed, he might have killed them in a gentleman-like manner.

Every thing has its uses, and its abuses. But though this be granted, shall we neglect the use, because it may possibly bring the abuse along with it ? I have heard declaimers against the science of bruising say, “ that a knowledge of self defence, makes people quarrelsome.” If I may speak, from very limited experience, I think the contrary. I was well acquainted with Perrins, and never in my

life saw a more harmless, quiet, inoffensive being; I have the pleasure of knowing Gulley—yes reader—the pleasure; I would rather know him, than many Sir Billys and Sir Dillys, and he is neither quarrelsome, turbulent, nor overbearing.

We will now, gentle reader, return for a moment to Hatton Garden, where leaving Mrs. Emery and Ann tête á tête, you may, if you prefer a walk, accompany me, and honest Jack Emery, to a tavern in Carey-street, kept by John Gulley. As we passed along, Emery said, “ You, conceive, I dare say, Romney, that I am going to introduce you into a society of rogues and pickpockets, and if you can compound for the loss of your purse or handkerchief, it will be a lucky escape; but rest assured you are mistaken. Gulley’s house is, of course, open to all descriptions, but the majority of his customers are people of reputation and respectability.

This account, I confess, was some relief to my mind, where a considerable degree of prejudice existed against prize-fighters, and the houses they frequent. When we arrived, Gulley was unfortunately from home, but Crib, the champion of England, was officiating as his locum tenens, and handing about pots of porter and grog, with persevering industry. Mrs. Gulley, a neat little woman, civil and attentive, superintended the bu-

siness of the bar ; where, through Emery's interest, for I found he was in high favour, we obtained leave to sit. Crib uncorked and decanted, but could not give us his company ; which to me, as a novice in such scenes, would have been a great treat, owing to the business of the house, which he seemed to pursue much to its master's interest. Crib, who has obtained popularity by his prowess, was originally a coal heaver, and has several brothers in the same employment ; he is sturdy and stout built, about five and twenty, stands five feet eight inches, clumsy in appearance, rather hard featured, with a profile not unlike Cooke the tragedian. He is, I believe, a good natured, quiet fellow, and after we had detained him a few minutes in conversation, " Well," said Emery, " what do you think of the greatest man in his way, this, or perhaps, any other country can boast ? for Gulley has altogether declined the business."

" Why to speak the truth, notwithstanding your caution, I expected, in a house kept, and frequented by boxers, to have seen nothing but blackguards, and to have heard nothing but blasphemy ; but I am so pleasingly deceived, and so comfortably situated, that I believe this will not be the last visit I shall pay Mrs. Gulley ; and as to the champion of England, I can only wonder how a person of his

apparently good disposition, can ever be wrought up to wound, to lame, perhaps to kill his adversary."

"Come, come Romney, I brought you here to be amused, and not to moralize; but since you are for the latter, we will e'en wish Mrs. Gulley good night."

Good heaven! thought I, as we walked back to Hatton Garden, what a strange world this is! that men possessing dispositions calculated to make good, domestic members of society, should support themselves and their families, by bruising each other, sometimes even unto death! What must have been the feelings of Gulley's wife, who appears soft and feminine, when her husband went out, in the face of thousands, to fight Gregson, one of the most powerful men in the kingdom! And how is it, that people can meet in this sanguinary manner, without any cause of quarrel? Is it glory that stirs them on? Can ambition so far stimulate a man, that he shall be dead to a sense of pain, and callous to personal suffering? It must be so, for a meeting of this kind, is so truly a matter of business, that previous to the most fierce and determined battles, the parties shake hands, as a proof of amity, and this is the signal for black eyes, bloody noses, broken ribs, and in some instances, *death!*

Week after week wore away, and still no news of my manuscript. Daily I attended the theatre, where a great oddity acted as porter, and with whom I should have been highly amused, had my mind been in a state to receive it; but I had now been nearly three months in London, living upon the sale of the *Itinerant*, and the very means I took to relieve myself from embarrassment, threatened again to involve me, without the same resource. I had so often enquired of Appleby, the little pompous being above mentioned, "whether Mr. Sheridan was in town?" that he was become very familiar. Calling one morning with the usual question, I received the usual answer, but in a tone as if he had something further to say. In one hand he held a pot of porter, in the other eatables, and as soon as he had washed down a mouthful of mastication, he repeated, "No, Sir! Old Sherry is not in town, and young Sherry is going abroad for his health; but what of that? Appleby is no flincher, he'll stand by old Drury to the last, and here he is in statu quo to tell you so; and more than that: if you can keep a secret, I could tell you, that the *old one* dines to day with a party of gentlemen in the guzzling room."

"Where's that?"

"Up stairs—but mum—and d——n all Jacobins."

“ I’ll thank you to deliver a letter to Mr. Sheridan when he comes.”

“ If I say I’ll do a thing, I’ll do it, and then it is done. Appleby’s no flincher, but your friend, sound heart and true. But when do you come out, and what’s the part? are you for a sock, or a buskin?” “ Neither.”

“ Nay don’t fight *shy*; when you become one of us, you’ll find out that Appleby, here he stands in statu quo, is the man to be trusted, aye, and the man to be consulted too. When Stephen Kemble came out, I said to him, say’s I, Falstaff’s your man, my boy, you are ready for the part, and he took my advice; now to you I say, play the starved apothecary, and your fortune’s made.”

What a machine is man! that a few thoughtless words, uttered by the most insignificant of human beings, should have power to change his course, to turn him into a path he had not the most distant idea of exploring; although the greater wonder perhaps is, that the thought of acting had never occurred to myself. I have generally been fruitful enough in devices, but this never once entered my imagination, ’till the pigmy compound of gin and consequence, first engendered it; and from that moment it took firm possession of my mind. I returned the ob-

ject home, wrote a letter to Mr. Sheridan, and then consulted Ann upon the fitness of the undertaking; which we at length agreed, was not only fit, but highly proper as matters had turned out. Between six and seven, I again encountered *Appleby*. At my entrance, with a significant nod, he pointed upwards, and said "there he is in statu quo; give me your letter, and if you don't say *Appleby's* your man for a message, may you never give me a pot of porter."

In a few minutes he returned, and giving me back my letter, exclaimed, "It wont do." "Come *Appleby*, says one gentleman "drink," so I took a glass of wine;" Take a second says another, and so I did; fine old port and madeira, but no *sherry*; he's off—Prince sent for him—some jollification business."

"Did not you tell me this moment he was up stairs?"

"So he was, but he's gone I tell you, gone in statu quo, and you may follow him; *Appleby* says so, and he's no flincher, nor no jacobin, whatever Mr. Matthews may say.

Returning slowly down the strand, I sauntered into the Albion coffee-house, where I frequently

spent a pleasant hour amidst rational society. One young man had particularly interested me. His countenance was open, manly, and intelligent; descriptive of good sense, and knowledge of the world; nor did his conversation belie these promises. He had for several evenings been the oracle of the company, and people of the first respectability treated him with the deference due to exalted talent. This evening I found the usual party assembled, amongst whom, were military officers of high rank; when, in the midst of a very interesting debate, the door was rudely forced open, and an ill looking fellow entered, followed by another of mean and diminutive size, who appeared to skulk behind the first, as if fearful of some outrage. The little man, scarcely shewing himself, cried out, "thats he," at the same time pointing to the upper end of the room.

As no particular person was identified, we each looked at the other; but the moment my eye fell on our young orator, I mentally said "seek no further." His countenance had assumed an ashy paleness, and the tremblings of fear possessed his limbs; but our doubts, if any yet remained, were momentary, for the first man bawled out "Mr. ——— you are my prisoner, so come along." "Is it for debt?" was asked by several, but the young

man had rushed out of the room, attended by his jailor, and no one followed, except myself, and a person who seemed to be more than a tavern acquaintance of the prisoners, for he pursued his friend, who was just leaving the house when we reached the bar. The little informer however remained, and determined to know the reason of his behaviour, which appeared in a despicable light, I asked his motive for conduct so cruel. "But perhaps continued I, you are the plaintiff in this business." "No he was not." "Revenge then has actuated you to be eventually perhaps the ruin of this young man?"

"No sir ! Justice ! you know not the character of the person you seem so much to pity. Why sir, he's a common swindler."

"Impossible ! and if he was here, he would cram your words down your throat."

"No he would not ; guilt would make a coward of him, for *he* knows, that I know him *well*."

"Has he ever swindled you?"

"Yes ! and every body that came within the sound of his dangerous tongue. 'Tis well perhaps for you, and the other gentlemen that he is this

night secured ; for some deep laid scheme, take my word for it, to impose upon one, or more of you, was in agitation. I speak not this rashly, but from a perfect knowledge of his character, which is artful, dangerous and designing.”

When I returned to the room, and reported as above, the surprise of the company was as great, as their admiration had heretofore been; and we all agreed that if he was really a deceptive character, with such superior talents, there was no calculating the mischief society, might suffer.

The day after this adventure, I was surprized by the following note from the prisoner.

“ Dear sir

I am very desirous to have the pleasure of seeing you for a few minutes in the course of this day, if you could make it convenient. I would not willingly trespass too much upon your good nature, by subjecting you to visit this abode of wretchedness unnecessarily; but I have the vanity to think that I once possessed some portion of your good opinion, at least as much as the limited nature of our acquaintance could warrant, and I confess my anxiety to convince you, that I am not wholly unworthy of your esteem.

“The good opinion of one man of merit and genius I more value, than the babbling echo of a thousand fools, or interested parasites.

I remain,

Dear Sir,

Yours respectfully,

“Tuesday morning.

“ ——— ———.”

Curiosity, and a latent wish to find him innocent, tempted me to attend this summons; when I heard a long account of embarrassments, originating in a well known military character, and moreover a member of parliament, who had decoyed him from the fairest prospects, into a business which ended in debt and a long residence in the King's Bench. That the officer had given him a bond for a considerable sum, I think a £1000, upon which he was then endeavouring to raise money to pay his debts, for that his various applications to have the bond redeemed were disregarded or treated with contempt. I went to the lock-up house, with a full determination, as I thought, to tell the young man of the reports in circulation, and to give him an opportunity of vindicating himself from charges so foul; but he made it appear that he was so much “more sinned against than sinning,” and was, in this instance, if he spoke truth, and I had no right to call his veracity in question, so much the victim of other

people's want of punctuality, rather than his own, that I had not courage to wound feelings already sore from the preceding evening's exposure; besides, my nature sickened at the task of calling a man of superior education and attainments by the pitiful name of swindler; which, perhaps, after all, was misapplied, at least I hoped so, and what we wish we readily believe. I know I shall be blamed for not allowing him an opportunity of clearing his character, and I am conscious I deserve it; but, at the time, I wanted nerve, and afterwards I was informed by a friend of Colonel ——'s that the whole story, bond and all, was a complete fabrication.

Now, although my last informant's veracity was not held in very high estimation, yet, I thought my safest and wisest plan would be to receive his intelligence as genuine, and to give up entirely a man, formed for admiration, but who was at best a mysterious character, and might eventually lead me into error.

I have suppressed names in this little narrative, because nothing of guilt was clearly ascertained against Mr. ——, or impropriety on the part of the Colonel; otherwise, I should have no scruple in holding them up to the detestation they merited.

CHAP. VII.

“ THE CONFEDERACY.”

SIR JOHN VANBURGH.

I found little or no difficulty in procuring leave to try my talents, at Drury-lane theatre, in the part of Lord Ogleby.

The Clandestine Marriage had seldom been brought forward since the decease of Mr. King ; and as a new generation had sprung up, I was less liable to sink by comparison, than in any other part ; besides, it had for years been my favourite character ; and as the following Monday was fixed for my *debüt*, I lost no time in reading and studying, to make the representation as impressive as possible. But here again adverse fortune attended me. On the Thursday, by which time I had worked up my imagination to something like hope, news arrived that the Clandestine Marriage could not be performed, and that Mr. Sheridan had fixed upon Sir Peter Teazle for my debut. Electricity could not have given me a more painful shock. It was every

way an unfortunate change. The School for Scandal was performed many times in every season, and the part of Sir Peter had been attempted by a vast variety of actors; however, there was no choice between that and nothing, and with a heavy heart I accepted the appointment. One rehearsal was thought sufficient for an old play and a veteran actor; but what was my surprise, agitation, and alarm, when I found the manuscript from which this comedy was performed in provincial theatres, differed so materially from the original, it was utterly impossible to connect the speeches. Mrs. Jordan, with a kindness peculiarly her own, endeavoured to reconcile the text, but 'twas impossible. Dowton advised me to give it up, and Elliston thought the difficulties insurmountable, unless I could get the performance postponed for a few days.

This I attempted, but in vain; the play was advertised for Monday, and must be done. Considering this as perhaps the only chance I should ever be allowed, I borrowed the original MS. and went home with a heavy heart and depressed hopes.—This was Friday; had the part, though very long, been entirely new to me, I could have studied it in the time; but in this case I had not only to learn, but to unlearn, the more difficult task of the two; I had to cut out a line or a speech here, and introduce a line or a speech there; in short, it was a

complication of embarrassment almost from the beginning to the end, and I could not even be indulged with another rehearsal ; nevertheless by Monday evening, I found myself tolerably correct, though not easy ; and made my appearance before the first audience, in the first theatre in the kingdom.

Intense application had fatigued my mind, and left such an oppression on my spirits, that I was languid, listless, and incapable of that exertion the part required ; and when the play began my knees literally smote each other. I stamped, I stretched, and said to myself, “ Limbs do your office and support me well !” They heeded me not, but maintained a shameful imbecility during the whole of the first scene. I recovered, in some degree, during the second act, but ere it was finished, I was threatened with a new misfortune. Whether owing to want of rest, during the last three nights, or the clothes not being sufficiently aired, I know not, but I found my voice going, and that it was necessary to husband it with the greatest care, lest it should totally fail before the conclusion of so long a part. This was much against me ; it gave an appearance of tameness in speeches that required energy, which I plainly perceived the audience were conscious of, at least, I thought so, and it greatly added to my embarrassment. Cheered, however, and encouraged

beyond my deserts, the play at length ended, but not my trials. The newspapers, on the following day, were examined with a trembling hand and palpitating heart; but when I found that I was treated neither better nor worse than my predecessors it was a matter of great consolation, because I had no interest with editors either social or political; so far from it, the very papers with whom I agreed, in the latter point, were the most cutting in their observations. Some abused me, others praised me, and a third class exhibited a mixture of both; but if they spoke their *own* sentiments, without *favour* or *partiality*, I have no right to call their judgment in question.

Walking up the Strand, a few days afterwards, towards Drury-lane, in hopes of hearing something that might tend to raise my drooping spirits, I was awakened from a gloomy reverie by the well-remembered voice of an old friend; not merely an acquaintance, so misnamed, but a friend after thirty years' trial, a man who may truly be called one of those ornaments of human nature here and there to be met with,—thinly scattered indeed, but when found of incalculable value.

Doctor Charles Taylor was, I believe, originally intended for his present profession, but at the time I cut no inconsiderable figure in the dashing world,

he was a merchant in Manchester, of established worth, respectability, and property; and perhaps exhibits as great an instance of the mutability of riches as the mercantile world can produce; for one single night dispossessed him of nearly fifty thousand pounds, without being at all accessory by extravagance or carelessness, to his own ruin. The Doctor's travels over great part of the Continent, in pursuit of his villainous agent, would be irrelevant to this history, otherwise they abound with much interesting and useful matter, and I hope the worthy tourist will one day communicate them to the public. But to return—The sight of the Doctor was indeed better than physic; his kind enquiries, his known goodness of heart, his friendly invitation, altogether, gave such a fillip to the spiritual and animal economy of my frame, that from a slow, solemn, dead march, I beat an elastic quick step through Catherine-street, which soon placed me in the green room of Drury-lane Theatre. There the performers received me with their usual pleasantries, but no conversation about my acting—no manager to be heard of—no intelligence of my manuscript; nevertheless, my spirits were not depressed, the Doctor had screwed them up to the sticking place, for that day at least, and I returned to Ann in a state of mind which led her to imagine the tables were turning in my favour.

Mrs. Wakefield soon afterwards joined us in high spirits, and congratulated me on my engagement at Drury-lane Theatre, for three years certain. I thanked her for the kind interest she took in my fate, but assured her, no such circumstance had taken place, nor had I reason to suppose it ever would. Another friend came with the same account, which he had just heard at the O P and P S ; in fine, we talked the matter over, till I not only thought it *possible*, but *probable*. Of one thing I was well assured ; that a board would sit on the ensuing Saturday, at which Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Graham, and others would attend, for the purpose of making engagements, and deciding on the merit of new pieces ; so that in all likelihood, my fate, both as actor and author, would then be decided.

The day before this anxiously expected Saturday, we were engaged to dine in John-street the Adelphi, with our valuable friend Doctor Taylor, secretary to the society of arts and sciences ; of whose capability to fill so respectable an office, I wish to say a few words, grounded on long and personal experience. The Doctor, to a general acquaintance with the polite arts, adds a practical knowledge of trade, agriculture, and chemistry ; to sum up all, he seems born for the station in which providence has placed him, and I am sure it is a high gratification to his well-wishers, and that involves every body who knows him, that his decline of life is so respec-

tably comfortable, and that fortune, after robbing him of a splendid establishment, has settled him at last in a situation to which he is an ornament.

True to our appointment, on Friday the twenty-fourth day of February—I shall never forget it—we attended Doctor Taylor's dinner table, and were received by Mrs. Taylor, the fac-simile of her husband in kindness, with the smile of welcome. The day passed in a review of former events, and a recapitulation of matters more recent; in which we alternately became relators and hearers, each feeling an interest in the other's adventures. Two gentlemen from Manchester, with whom I was acquainted, dropped in to tea, and amongst other subjects of conversation, my affairs being introduced, they drank success to my first benefit at Drury-lane theatre; to secure which, the Doctor made an offer of his services with persons of distinction, the Manchester traders promised to speak in my behalf to merchants in the city; in short, I looked upon myself as already seated in the saddle of success, and that nothing remained, but to ride away as fast as I could. Sanguine simpleton! Infatuated fool! could not the many years of calamity I had experienced, teach me the folly of building expectation on the sandy basis of hearsay report, or the flattering encouragement of friends, who believe a good, because they wish it?

The supper hour had long passed—the watchman was going eleven—our worthy host and hostess saw us to the door, which a servant that moment opened—when a light flared into the hall, for which we could in no degree account, but rushing with one accord into the street, the truth became dreadfully palpable. Some tremendous building was in flames, and apparently at no great distance, for the illumination almost rivalled the light of day. John Street was perfectly silent, but running round the corner, the answer to my eager enquiry was, *Drury-lane Theatre is on fire!!* Although I had no immediate interest in Drury-lane Theatre, the possibility that eventually I might have had, gave a pang to my heart, that for the moment was intolerable; to add to my distress, my ill fated manuscript was perhaps at that instant feeding the flames, and I had imprudently resigned its possession without a line of copy. But though self engrossed my first care, I was by no means indifferent to the calamity as it regarded others. Many respectable individuals would, for a time at least, be thrown out of employment, and though the leading members of the dramatic establishment could feel no material inconvenience, there were many upon low salaries who would be very seriously affected. Whilst these things were revolving in my mind, I was fixed against a lamp post, nearly as inanimate as the iron which supported me; and was so buried in meditation, that the

anxiety of the friends I had left never once occurred; when Ann, whose impatience could be no longer controuled, came in search of me, and we directly proceeded to the scene of destruction. The painful intensity of my first feelings, now gave place to awe, wonder, and if I may be allowed the term, admiration. The object before me was awfully grand, and majestically sublime; uniting the two extreme degrees of light and heat, which seemed, as it were, to contend for superiority; but the latter bore the palm, for the heat was intolerable. In two hours this noble monument of national splendour was a heap of ruins, and the following day it was laughable to hear the various opinions concerning the cause of this dreadful calamity. One party knew for a certainty that it originated with the *Jacobins*; another were firmly assured that the *Methodists* were concerned; because, as they preached against theatres, they might think they were doing their duty in taking this means to suppress them; but a third, who never decided upon slight grounds, but judged of causes by their effects, and exactly knew the spirit of the party, were convinced that it was set on fire at the instigation of *Buonaparte*, and thought the country rightly served for cherishing foreigners, particularly Frenchmen, the *natural enemies* of this nation, and the sworn foes to its prosperity. There were other opinions which involved the Irish, and brought them almost upon

a level with Frenchmen; in short, it served for a nine day's wonder, and then gave place to Mrs. Clarke, the Duke of York, and Colonel Wardle.

By the bye, I had my pocket picked of a handsome pair of silver spectacles.

The following Sunday I was engaged to dine with Sir Richard Philips, at Hampstead, under a promise to act as guide to Doctor Walcot, (Peter Pindar,) whose loss of sight rendered the deputation but too necessary. Mr. Pratt, another gentleman celebrated in the world of letters, gave us the meeting; and the day afforded a literary treat, such as I never before banqueted upon; it was indeed a mental feast, and I record it with pleasure and pride, greater pleasure, and greater pride, than had I feasted with illustrious fools, or banqueted with noble blockheads. Sir Richard abstains from all sorts of animal food, even poultry, game, and fish; and is withal very abstemious in his beverage; yet notwithstanding these privations, his countenance exhibits a picture of health, nearly bordering upon plethora. Doctor Walcot was in high glee, by the same token, he indulges most liberally in the vice of swearing; independent of this fault, and a fault it is, particularly in a man who stands in no need of such resources; there are those whose conversation would be wholly unnoticed, but from that indi-

vidual cause ; I say, independent of this, Peter Pinder is animated and intelligent ; highly liberal in his opinions, and blessed with great suavity of manners. After dinner, Mr. Pratt read excellently well, a manuscript of the Doctor's, full of point and ——— abuse I was going to say, but if you please, you may substitute the word *truth*.

When the time for our departure arrived, there was only one vacant seat in the Hampstead stage, in which I placed the Pindaric Bard, and buttoning my coat, prepared for a walk. The evening was fine, though cold ; the moon was at the full, and pedestrianism I was ever partial to. 'Tis a mode of travelling that carries with it an air of independence, and whilst heaven continues the use of my legs, I hope and trust it will always have a preference. I had proceeded near half way through Oxford-street, when a decently dressed, but very infirm old woman in crossing the street, narrowly escaped being run down by a coach ; another was advancing very rapidly, when I ran to her assistance, and with all the strength I was master of, dragged her safe to the foot-path. As she appeared faint from alarm, and weak from exertion, I did not immediately leave her, but continued my support a few minutes longer ; when strange and unnatural as it may appear, I thought I felt her hand in my coat pocket I instantly advanced mine in the

same direction, and found my apprehension confirmed; my pocket book was gone, containing, unfortunately and imprudently, all my worldly property, received the day before from Messrs. Taylor, and Hessey. As I challenged the old hypocrite with the theft, and was in the act of seizing her, she took her petticoats under her arm thereby discovering a pair of boots, and turning the corner, scampered down Swallow-street with such expedition, that, although a good footman, I was once nearly losing sight of her; and this must inevitably have been the case, had not Luna, aided by the lamps, rendered it nearly as light as day. The reader will wonder why I did not give the alarm, and by that means procure aid in my pursuit. The fact is, that at the instant such a thought never occurred. I was too much engaged with the one object, to mind any other, and as few moments elapsed between the robbery, and finding myself in Swallow-street, which my gentleman in masquerade likewise left at the very first turn, I was still too intent in pursuit to think of the only means to render it effectual, and it was not, till I found myself losing ground, that I bawled out for the first time "stop thief." But here the invocation was useless, for there was nobody to stop the thief. The street, as far as I could see, was empty; doubtless well acquainted with this part of the town, he led me to the identical spot where

assistance, would be implored in vain, and I was giving-up my cause as lost, when his petticoats, much in my favour from the beginning, caught an iron spike, and tripped up his heels. Summoning all my remaining strength, I pounced upon my prey, and now first discovered a man a very few paces behind me. To him I related how affairs stood between me and my prostrate foe; and, announcing himself as a special constable, he willingly entered into my cause. Without more deliberation, I committed the thief into his custody, insisting at the same time, upon my book being restored. This demand not being complied with, I was proceeding in my search, when the truth, the fatal truth, burst upon my astonished mind with a shock that nearly overpowered it, and converted hope into despair. The confederates; for such indeed they were, looked up the street, and down the street; I did the same, though from a different motive, but could only perceive one solitary being, and he at too great a distance to be useful.

However, grown desperate from despair, I gave my voice its loudest pitch, and was that instant knocked down by the villain in petticoats, but still my power of articulation remained, and that I exerted so effectually, that the being sent by heaven to my rescue rushed forward, and with one blow laid the man *confessed* upon his mother earth; which the

other perceiving, took to his heels. By this time I had regained my feet and explaining the sex of the fugitive, and the loss I had sustained, my champion flew like lightning after him, and when I came up, the sham lady was in safe hands, and without hesitation restored my darling pocket book, containing the whole property, except a little wife, of S. W. R.

After expressing my obligations, this powerful redresser of wrongs consented, at my request to leave the wretches to their fate; for having redeemed my all, my duty to society, I am sorry to say, was a minor object, and forgotten, the moment my personal dangers were at an end.

My deliverer stood about five-feet eight-inches, strong built and beautifully proportioned; his face rather handsome, and his address above the common stamp; in short bating a few points, he so strongly reminded me of Charles Camelford, that I felt an interest in him, independent of the great service he had performed, and requested to know his name; he answered, "*John Gulley!*"

"What! Gulley of Carey-street?"

"The same Sir, where I shall be proud to see you, whenever it suits your convenience.

This circumstance was matter of interesting conversation in Northumberland-street, but I was averse to making the business public, because I attached shame to myself for suffering two such hardened offenders to escape. It is, doubtless, the bounden duty of every individual to prefer the good of society to his own private feelings, and in yielding to mine, I not only committed error, but actual injustice both against the laws and my fellow creatures, by screening culprits from the former, and turning them loose upon the latter. Besides, it is possible that I may eventually be the cause of bringing them to the gallows, when, had they been taken up for this crime, a milder punishment might have led to repentance, and an amendment of life.

CHAP. VIII.

“THE MANAGERS.”

ANONYMOUS.

FOR several days I haunted the ruins of poor old Drury, meditating upon my manuscript, fearful of enquiring its fate, and yet, of course, anxious to have that fate ascertained. At length I waited upon Mr. Wroughton as a probable medium of intelligence, and learnt, to my inexpressible satisfaction that the play was forthcoming, uninspected, and unopened. This news took a weight from my mind, and the next consideration was, how to dispose of it; for, on the supposition that Mr. Harris should read and approve, the leading characters would suffer materially in the representation, Covent Garden Theatre affording scarcely an apology for the transcendent talents of a *Jordan* and an *Elliston*. But situated as I was, there was no alternative, so I dispatched the *Irish Girl* with a note of introduction to Mr. Harris, and in a very few days she returned with the following observations.

“ The introduction of Proteus as the waiting Maid is much too dangerous to risk. A London audience always look upon the character of a man in women’s cloaths as repugnant to delicacy. In this long scene they would infallibly break out, and the play would be d——nd in the first act. Some other incident must be thought of.

“ As Mrs. Davenport must play the part of Everilda, the singing had better be left out, it will be broad enough without.

“ Shorten the part of Gertrude, let her have no long speeches.

“ Heighten the part of Albert. Let him be a middle aged man, throw him as much as possible into action, in short, make it a part fit for Young.

“ Ramsgate’s speeches in act second too long.

“ Change the name of Gibbs, and if you wish Munden to do it, improve the part.

“ Some stronger reasons should appear for the necessity of Proteus’ disguises.

“ The incident of the Dyer too farcical, and highly dangerous in a fifth act.

“The fifth act is feeble and destitute of any great interest, Albert’s character dwindles into nothing. Work at it, and try to make it more effective. When they are all together, finish the play as soon as possible.

You will see that I have been very free in my strictures, but after what you witnessed last Thursday, you must acknowledge how vain and useless the attempt to bring out a comedy with any weak and objectionable, points. Lose no time in your alterations but send it back improved as soon as possible.”

H. HARRIS.

Although disappointed, I was not discouraged. Assured from the best authority, that Mr. Harris never gave himself the trouble to animadvert upon a play, unless it held forth a promise of success; I cheerfully set about the proposed alterations, which, though at a first view they appeared weighty and manifold, and not to be completed in less than three or four months, were, by excessive industry and application, finished in as many weeks; but even that period proved too long, and brought with it nothing but mortification and disappointment. “Mr. Harris expressed himself pleased with the alterations, but the Benefits were to commence in ten days, and that circumstance prevented a possibility of bringing it out this season; nevertheless,

if such was my wish, he would recommend it to Mr. Colman, and probably it might be accepted in the summer Theatre."

In short, it appeared to me, after all, as if he wished to remove the load from his own shoulders, and place it upon the manager of the Haymarket-Theatre. I thought so at the time, but had still a greater cause afterwards; for I wrote two letters to him on the subject of the Irish Girl, the following winter, neither of which he was polite enough to notice.

Anxious if possible, on many accounts to give the play a trial, I accepted Mr. Harris's offer, and, after it had been some days in Mr. Colman's possession, called at his house in St. George's Fields, but could get no satisfaction. At length after several applications, I received the three following notes.

Monday, 24th April, 1809.

" Sir,

Some urgent private business, which has occupied much of my time for several days, still continues to engage my attention. Towards the end of the present week however, I shall have leisure to peruse the MS. which you have done me the favour to transmit (through my friend Mr.

H. Harris) for my inspection; after which, I shall have the pleasure of writing to you.

I am, Sir,

Your most obdt. servant,

G. COLMAN."

28th April, 1809.

"Sir,

I am under the necessity of trespassing on your patience till Tuesday next; when you may be assured that I will be explicit on the subject of your comedy. Believe me, this delay in transmitting to you my opinion, arises from no false delicacy in communicating it; for, however contrary my sentiments may sometimes prove to the wishes of an author, it is my duty to deliver them candidly; and my rejection, or reception of a play, is a managerial matter of business; but some dry proceedings of the law, at present take up almost the whole of my time, and oblige me to ask your indulgence till the day above mentioned.

I am, Sir,

Your obdt. servant

G. COLMAN."

Monday Night, 1st May, 1809.

"Sir,

There is, I think much matter in your

play calculated to produce effect on the stage, and to suit the present taste of the public : but in comparing its general construction, with the construction of the company of performers now engaged in the Haymarket Theatre, I feel myself obliged (and with regret) to decline the offer of your comedy. Its representation this summer, under such circumstances, could not be eligible, either for the author or the house.

I return the M. S. with this letter, and with many thanks for your proposal

I am, Sir,

Your obdt. humble servant,

G. COLMAN."

So terminated the flattering prospect, which lured me to London.

After six months residence, I found myself poor in every thing but experience, and that dearly purchased. "Perhaps not," said Ann. "You have, by this journey acquired plenty of matter for a fourth volume of the Itinerant, and, as one of your fair readers, with unlimited earnestness, hoped the book would never have an end, she, at least, will not be sorry to see it continued.

This was a hint not to be neglected ; I had

immediate recourse to my common place book and made notes of every thing that had occurred ; on referring to it, I find I have omitted an anecdote, very interesting to me at the time, which ought to have had precedence.

In Passion Week, all the managers who want people, and all the actors who want employment, assemble in London. One evening I sauntered into a room at the O. P. and P. S. their usual rendezvous, where I met with a motley group of at least fifty of both descriptions, and a curious assemblage it was. There were managers of first, second, and third rates ; first, those dignified personages who govern theatres royal ; next, those who preside over theatres by licence ; and lastly the humble purveyors for public amusement whose ambition soars not beyond that appendage to agriculture—a *Barn*. The actors were not less diversified than the managers. Some were dressed in the first stile of fashion ; others barely clean and decent ; and a third class neither one nor the other. It was curious to observe the different characters of countenance exhibited by those who had made engagements to their satisfaction, and others who despaired of making any. The pompous declamation of the former, who with hat askew, and neck-cloth nostril high, ever and anon applied a small switch to a shining hessian boot, with a self approving

smile, which seemed to say, "Am not I the boy for a benefit?" when contrasted with the other, formed a lively picture of hope and despair, visible to the most casual observer. Instead of the heart-cheering vinous juice, drank by the successful candidate, an humble half-pint of porter, frothing in shining pewter, was the substitute. The hat too, with modest diffidence, sat straight and flat, nor dared show signs of impudent independence by wanton inclination to right or left; a black silk handkerchief met the closely-buttoned waistcoat, whilst, with an air of dejection, unheeding the merry joke and cheerful song, the man of many parts, but few engagements, drew figures on the table in slopped porter, till roused by the President, with "Success to the stage, gentlemen," he ventured to look up, and, sighing, drank the toast.

I had not been long seated, when a tall good-looking, but shabbily dressed man, in years, came hobbling up the room, and bowing to each box, seemed perfectly acquainted with the company. He smiled, snapped his fingers, and with much vivacity exclaimed, "Well, here I am, gentlemen; come to see you once more. Tom Gag's true to his time you see, 'though the gout had nearly laid me up, I was determined to come. Must have a slice of some of you—smacking salaries, and overflowing benefits—now's your time—Tom Gag's

your man—shan't live to come another year—go out, some of these days, like the snuff of a candle—no matter. Finch, bring a bottle of wine—stop—that smells too much of the pocket—a glass of brandy and water will do.”

This strange speech, delivered in a manner peculiar to himself, had a wonderful effect on the before desponding part of the group, whose eyes, ears, and attention were immediately placed on Tom Gag. Hopes of immediate engagement, and good benefits, filled every countenance with lines of eager expectation; for as the moon is to the sea, so is the pocket to a man's countenance; the one ebbs and flows with the other.

To gain some information of this strange personage, I addressed myself to an intelligent looking man who sat next me. “What, Sir!” he replied, “don't you know Tom Gag? I thought every theatrical person had either seen or heard of him! he is manager of the theatre royal at Lax-Water: has accumulated a fortune by care and perseverance; and though never a performer of any eminence himself, is a tolerably good judge of acting, and collects a company every summer, capable of entertaining one of the most fashionable audiences out of London. He is a very clever fellow, and has the gift of wheedling and talking the great folks into any

thing. It was once his lot to be honoured by the presence of Majesty at his theatre ; Rosina happened to be the farce commanded, the part of Belville by Mr. Incledon ; but Tom having unfortunately quarrelled with the lady who should have performed Rosina, she refused to make her appearance. In this dilemma, the manager posted away to our good old sovereign, who is ever easy of access ; and being not only a clever sensible fellow, but the most impudent dog in the world, “ I am come,” said he, “ an please your Majesty, to crave your royal clemency, in behalf of the actress who should have performed the part of Rosina, this evening.

“ What, what, an actress ? what’s her name ? what’s her name ?”

“ Bunting, my gracious King ?”

“ Eh ! What—what—what ?—Bunter—Bunter ?—Bad name—very bad name.”

“ Your Majesty mistakes ; I said Bunting.”

“ Oh, aye ! Bunting—you said Bunting. Well, what’s amiss with Bunting ?”

“ Why, please your Majesty, her son little Billy

Bunting, as sweet a boy as ever was seen, has broke his arm, and the poor mother has been in fits ever since."

"Poor thing.—poor thing! Well, and what will you do for Rosina?"

"Oh, the easiest thing in the world, if your Majesty will excuse it."

"To be sure—to be sure :—what—what is it?"

"Why your Majesty doubtless knows, that William and Phebe are the principle objects in the piece; and as Mr. Incledon will give us some of his best songs, Rosina will never be missed: or, if she should, Mr. Shuffle shall dance a hornpipe in fetters, and that will make ample compensation."

"Eh! what! a hornpipe in fetters! that must be very funny; I should like to see it!"

"So Tom Gag persuaded the King that Rosina was of no use in the piece, and that a hornpipe in chains would answer the purpose every bit as well."

By this time the ingenious manager of Lax-Water had seated himself in the next box, with two or three theatrical sprigs, and another manager from

a large commercial town in the north, whose name I understood to be Tag.

I had a full view of Mr. Tag from the place I occupied, and found him to be a clean neat figure, dressed in the costume of a country squire ; but without any of the downright plainness that we are apt to attach to the conversation of such characters.

In dress, and address, he was the very reverse of Mr. Gag ; and their mode of enlisting performers differed in every respect ; for although Gag could wheedle with the d—l, he had no chance against Tag's sophistry, who fairly ran down his opponent, by a torrent of language that carried conviction ; especially when he contended with a poor actor who wanted an engagement, and had sense enough to know that half a loaf is better than none at all. This gentleman's character I learned from the intelligent person above-mentioned, who added, " in short, sir, you hear he is now endeavouring to convince that young man that eighteen shillings is better than a guinea, and I'll be bound he will accomplish it. Only listen."

" The fact is, my dear sir," continued Tag, " you possess talent, and talent must be remunerated ; the public know how to appreciate, and

therefore the benefit is the object, and not the salary. At any rate, we should always endeavour to make our means meet our expenditure; for instance, if your salary only amounts to eighteen shillings per week, and eighteen shillings, in the country, let me tell you, is a very pretty thing——”

“A mint of money!” interrupted Gag, “not many years ago, the highest salary in my company was nine shillings.” “Aye, that may be, Mr. Gag,” continued Tag, “but your scheme, I humbly conceive, was then in its infancy; times are now altered, and I don’t see how a performer can pay his way, and appear like a gentleman, for less than eighteen shillings a week. The salary you last received, was a guinea, you say, and you could scarcely live upon it; but, my dear sir, look at the price of provisions, lodgings, every article of necessity, not to say luxury; why they are one-fourth higher than with us; so that deducting one-fourth of a guinea, and your salary is reduced to fifteen shillings and ninepence; to say nothing of benefits, which, with us, are the sure reward of merit.”

“All this is very fine, friend Tag,” observed Gag, “but the matter is, will you *come down* with the *ready*? The lad has no money to carry him so

long a journey, and unless you lend him some, he can't *budge*."

"Why, the fact is, ours is but a *bread and cheese scheme*, and we have come to a determination to draw no monies from the treasury, by way of loan; so that in my professional capacity I am tied up, and, as a private gentleman, my fortune will not admit of it."

"But mine will," replied Gag, throwing half a guinea on the table. "There my fine fellow, that will keep you in *bub* and *grub* till you reach Laxwater. Let me see—we open on Monday, to-day is only Thursday; you'll walk it in three days easily; thirty miles a day is nothing for a young man like you; I'll meet you there—you shall have a *pet part* to open with—*eighteen hog* a week—and a benefit, which never fails. The natives will fill your Pit and Gallery; the visitors your boxes; and, at the end of the campaign, you'll have money in bank, or say Tom Gag's no conjurer. Come my service to you, and success to your benefit."

Mr. Tag, finding himself outgeneraled by this *liberal* offer of half a guinea, to carry a man 90 miles, with a sarcastic smile, observed, "Why really friend Gag, if I had offered the young gen-

tleman assistance, it should have been something more adequate to the purpose. Can you conceive a person of his respectable appearance, and doubtless, liberal habits, could travel ninety miles upon the scanty pittance of half a guinea? I confess, I feel an interest in the gentleman, for, possessing a pretty good guess at character, I dare venture to say, he will, one day, make an actor." The young man smiled. "Aye, aye," replied Gag, "a little flattery does well, but there's the *stuff*," pointing to the gold, "he can't live upon wind."

"Your pitiful offer, friend Gag," replied the other, "stimulates me to break a fixed rule between me, and the gentleman my partner." Then taking a handsome purse from his pocket, he chose from amongst many, a splendid guinea, and offering it, with a look of great condescension continued "the young gentleman shall not be stinted on the road; I shall expect to see him next Monday but one, and have not a doubt, as I shall make a point of putting him forward in his business, that, in a short time, he will be a credit to himself, and an honour to his profession." At the conclusion of this speech, Gag burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, exclaiming "Come that's a good one!— I give half a guinea to bear his expences ninety

miles, and you generously offer a whole one to carry him upwards of two hundred. Come, we'll drink to my friend Tag's liberality." The young man, after silently attending to this trial of generosity, rose up; paid his reckoning, and with a spirit that did him honour, thus addressed the contending managers. "Gentlemen, I have been but a short time on the stage, but from the little experience I have had, I am sorry to say, that lack of liberality, almost amounting to parsimony, is the characteristic of a manager. Whilst, like a *drone*, he feeds *luxuriously* on the *honey* provided by the *industry* of others, he is cruel and ungrateful enough to *oppress* the instruments that *support* him; nor feels one pang of remorse for having reduced his performers, by the *poverty* of their *pay*, to the necessity of committing actions, which, otherwise, they would blush to think of." At the end of this speech he abruptly left the room, and we saw him no more.

When the generals found they had spun their thread too fine, and by that means lost their recruit, chagrin was visible in each countenance.

"He's not to be had," said Gag, in an audible whisper.

"The fact is," replied Tag, drawing up the

muscles of his countenance into true managerial hypocrisy, "the fact is, my dear friend Gag, ours as I said before, is but a *bread and cheese scheme*, and were we to give way to the feelings of our hearts, which I confess I too often do, for who can bear to see the distresses ———"

"It wont do friend Tag, I tell you it wont do ; I'm an old soldier and not to be had. We have failed in *humbugging* the lad, dont let us *humbug* one another." Tag looked grand, but Gag continued. "I say that's a decent *swindle* of yours in the North. I understand it nets a clear five thousand a year, which is pretty well for a *bread and cheese scheme*, especially if you can do the people with eighteen shilling salaries." Mr. Tag's dignity was visibly offended by this freedom, "I don't know," replied he, as he took up his hat, "what you mean by humbug and swindle ; terms like these may suit the ears of those you are in the habit of conversing with, but as such language is discordant to mine, I shall for the present take my leave."

"Well, good bye brother Tag," said the other, "and success to *swindling*."

No one being now left in the box but Gag, I ventured to remove thither and drank his health,

“ Thank you sir. I saw you the other evening in Sir Peter ; very well, very well indeed ; but 'tis all over you see. Old Drury is gone, never to return. What do you do with yourself this summer? can't we have a *slice* of you at Lax Water? a rare place for benefits, none of your *bread* and *cheese schemes* I promise you. Yonder Tag fancies himself Cardinal Wolsey, but it wont do ; I dont care a *Jack straw* for him.” Then snapping his fingers, he called for another glass, and entertained me with an account of his establishment at Lax Water, his houses, his gardens, his theatre, and long ere we parted, I found him to be in reality, a very clever fellow.

We were upon the point of separation, when who should enter the room but my old and valued friend Egerton the actor, whom my reader will recollect as one of my theatrical comrades at Swansea, and who was celebrated at that period, not only for an excellent heart, but a clear head, and sound understanding, though somewhat tinctured with enthusiasm in his favourite pursuits. These consisted in an inveterate furor for *invasion*, or, as he was pleased to term it, the art of *improvement* ; nothing escaped his active mind ; the loading of a cannon, or the manufacture of a tennis ball, were objects of equal importance, and subject alike to the investigation

of his fertile genius. As he came up the room, his generous, open countenance beamed with good humour, and there was a stile of neatness and fashion in his outward appearance, which was, *indeed* an *improvement*, and outdid all his former ones, with the exception of a quizzical, vulgar looking green hat, bright and polished as a mirror.

The sight of so valuable a man was grateful to my heart, although it brought to my mind the last melancholy parting with Charles Camelford, that never to be forgotten, disinterested friend, whose untimely fate, with that of the lovely Fanny and his faithful followers, I have every reason to suspect ; as a vessel about that period was lost within sight of Boston harbour and every soul perished. 'Tis some years since I received the above heart rending intelligence, which I was the more easily led to believe, because certain that nothing but death could have prevented his writing.

Poor Camelford ! the best, the most exalted of mankind, met his death at that critical period when he was approaching the country he left to avoid it, and with him, those he held most dear. But *their* decease is rather to be envied than pitied ; for to be separated from such a friend and benefactor as Camelford, must have imbittered all their remain-

ing days; and life, to them, would have only been a prolongation of misery.

Egerton seated himself opposite to me, and the manager of Lax water, and a short time informed me, that amongst many other *improvements*, his finances had not been forgotten. Amongst various *patent inventions*, he had become the proprietor of several *patent theatres*, which produced a handsome income. Amongst other news, I learnt that my worthy manager, Mr. Masterman, had long slept with his fathers; that Giles, my old opponent, and poor Phil Lewis commonly called the *king of grief*, were likewise dead, and that the Theatre at Swansea was now governed by little Cherry, a very worthy man, late of Drury-lane Theatre, and of considerable talent in his profession. "But do you know my good friend" continued Egerton, with some emotion, "that a dreadful accident had nearly deprived me of life at Swansea?"

You know my predilection for works of ingenuity, and I think, I informed you of the many risks I ran, and the money I sunk in order to bring the diving bell to perfection. But finding I could not effect any great good by *improvements* on that *invention*, I turned my thoughts towards a plan to accelerate the art of swimming. With this view

I made a pair of cork fins for each foot, which were to expand, at every stroke, and of course must add greatly to the celerity of the motion ; but the first experiment I made had nearly been my last, for I found my feet altogether buoyant, and rendered useless by the support, and lightness of the cork ; so that, with all my strength, it was as much as I could do to keep my head above water, and had not a boat come to my relief, you would never have heard this story from *my* lips."

" A very dangerous experiment," replied I, "and one that doubtless sickened you of *improvements* in that line. But give me leave to ask what has brought you to town? are you recruiting?" "Why—yes. I want a few auxiliaries, and have just been with Matthews, who comes down in July."

" I must have a *slice* of him first" interrupted Gag.

Egerton unacquainted with his character, and usual mode of speech, looked at him, and then with his accustomed good humour replied " whereabouts will you take it? for Matthews is but thin, and if you cut too *large* a *slice*, there will be none left for me." This little sally caused a laugh—the two managers shook hands, and in five minutes were as intimate

as though they had known each other from childhood. A circumstance not uncommon in theatrical society, and by which that freezing stiffness, and unsocial distance so common in John Bull, is at once done away. We now departed, and having lodged Tom Gag safe at the York Hotel proceeded to the Hummums, Egerton's temporary abode; where, over a bowl of arrack punch, we made a confidential communication of the many adventures which had occurred during our separation. His had been nearly as eventful as my own, with this difference; fine weather and favourable breezes attended his voyage, whilst mine had been accompanied with storms and adverse winds, by which my bark narrowly escaped destruction. Ere we separated, I agreed to join his company for a few weeks upon liberal terms. "If things turn out as I expect," continued he, "I shall retire from the bustle of a theatrical life, and you may once more try your fortune as manager."

"If your plans are no secret, I should like to know what scheme you are now upon."

"Scheme! come, I see by the muscles of your countenance, that you think I am following my old visionary plans; but for once you are mistaken. This is not what *you* mean by a *scheme*, in other words, an impracticable project, founded in error, and pur-

sued in the mere spirit of enterprise; but a discovery of incalculable benefit to mankind in general, and from which I, as an individual, expect to reap an immense fortune. Do you observe this hat? Feel at it: 'tis light, tho' substantial; takes a beautiful colour, and admits of a fine polish; and yet sir, I can make that hat for the small sum of two shillings." Observing my surprise, he continued "you may well be astonished. If this elegant article can be retailed at three shillings and sixpence, which it may, and allow thirty-five and a half per cent, both to the manufacturer, and shopkeeper, what a benefit may society at large reap from the discovery."

"And pray my good friend, how long have you followed this new branch of business?"

"'Tis not above a month since I made the first discovery, and that was a mere accident. Ah! you may smile, but the fact speaks for itself.

At the top of my theatre in Taunton, there is a pigeon house, in which I keep a prodigious number of those birds. Not having paid them a visit for a considerable length of time, I one day ventured to raise my head above the trap door, but found the entrance so choaked with soil, or dung, that I was glad to make my retreat; not however before a large cake of the above dirt had covered my hat

so completely, and adhered to it so closely, that I paused in the act of removing what, at first appeared a nuisance, but will, eventually prove a matter of the greatest importance. Who knows thought I, but something for the good of society may arise out of this apparent accident? Here's a perfect hat in shape, and if, when hardened by the fire, it becomes strong and durable, why should not this covering, made at a light expence, and of home materials, be preferred to those of higher price, and manufactured from foreign produce? With a view to facilitate so desirable an event, I left my hat in the sun for several days, then ventured to remove the ingenious fabrick, and place it in a slow oven, from whence it was reclaimed after baking twenty-four hours ; but proved so brittle as scarcely to bear the touch. Meditating how to remedy this defect, I, at length agreed to introduce a little coarse wool and size into the composition ; which fully answered my expectation, and when painted and glazed produced the very hat before you. All I have now to do, is to purchase a patent for hats made from pigeons dung, and then I may fairly calculate upon sitting down comfortable for life."

Shakspeare I think says, "that genius is nearly allied to madness." 'Tis certain we seldom see persons of strong talent, without some singular marks of ec-

centricity. So it was with my friend Egerton. No man was better informed, better educated, or endowed by nature, with stronger tokens of genius ; no man more able to speak upon literary subjects, but invention and improvement were his weak points, the rocks on which he dashed to peices many a fair pound, and where he had more than once, nearly lost his life. Independent of this, I do not know such another man. He is the life and soul of company, without having recourse to blasphemy or indecency to give point to his jokes ; he his just in all his dealings ; has a hand and heart open to the calls of humanity ; and a tenderness towards the brute creation, that adds a lustre to his other virtues.

CHAP. IX.

“BELIEVE AS YOU LIST.”

MASSINGER.

ANN, who both loved and respected Egerton, anticipated much pleasure from the meeting, but exhibited more mirth than surprise when I explained the unsavoury materials of which his patent hat was composed. Surprized indeed she was, that the ordure of pigeons could be made so useful, but she was also too well acquainted with Egerton's ingenuity and eccentricity, to be astonished either at the one or the other.

As soon as breakfast was over, I repaired to the Hummums with intent to engage Egerton to dinner, but he was still in bed; nevertheless, upon the terms we were, I made no hesitation, but was shewn directly to his chamber. Giving him the morning salutation, I continued “early rising is not one of your *improvements* I see, and I am sorry to see it, because it would *improve* the health both of your body and mind. It is a sovereign panacea against

those fanciful wanderings of the imagination, which produce schemes impracticable, and plans incomprehensible. It strengthens the intellectual energies, and is a grand specific in all cases of nervous debility."

"He is a good divine who follows his own doctrine:—do you do so?"

"In the country always, and in town as far as the general difference of living will allow."

"Well, I believe you are right; nay, I am so truly convinced of it, that I have a machine in contemplation, by which I shall be forced up every morning at seven o'clock. By the bye, I have been dreaming of my newly invented hat, and think there may be further improvements upon it. Mean time, I shall go this very day about the patent." Whilst he was taking his morning repast, I spared no pains in persuading him to postpone his patent, at least till he had brought the process to perfection, and was fully convinced of the durability, as well as the cheapness of his hat. This, after much argument, he consented to, but not without many reflections on my ignorance of mechanics, and the great benefits society derived, from the efforts of ingenuity.

The latter part of the morning we devoted to the still smoking embers of old Drury, and so intent was Egerton on describing an improvement on the fire escape, and the mode of erecting Theatres without a possibility of accident by conflagration, that he observed not the rain, which had by this time nearly soaked us through ; and would doubtless have given rise to some animated observations on water proof cloth, had not I hailed a coach, and by that means changed the current of his ideas.

Mr. Crisp, formerly a member of my company at Liverpool, but now the manager of Worcester, Hereford, &c. had likewise promised to eat his nut-ton with me that day, and Ann truly rejoiced to see such old and valued friends.

After Tea, we proposed an adjournment to the O. P. when Crisp observing that he intended to purchase a new hat, but feared it was too late; "Don't distress yourself, my dear fellow," cried Egerton, "I'll give you one ; and permit me to say, such a one as you will not meet with every day ; here is a sample ;" but, attempting to take the last specimen of his inventive genius from the table, behold ! the piece came in his hand, the pigeon's dung having literally melted away, had fallen to pieces like quick lime, and the rain had aided the decomposition so completely, that nothing remained

of his famous hat but the coarse wool. Such was the premature end of this new invention, by which society lost a necessary and cheap article, and the Patent Office one hundred guineas.

A hatter was now indispensable, and having suited both my friends with this necessary part of their costume, Egerton examined his in every possible way, and very seriously asked the maker, "if he used pigeons dung?" This was more than my power of face could stand, and knowing likewise that this question was only the prelude to a dissertation on its properties and uses, I seized the Worcester manager by the arm, and we proceeded towards our destination. It was a lovely night, and crossing Southampton-street, a soft, delicate, feminine voice, aided by the tones of a well played flute, brought the maid of Lodi to our recollection; sung with a degree of taste and elegance, that struck *hard* on the chords of sensibility. Hearts, not callous to the "concord of sweet sounds," are insensibly attracted by the notes of a female, if at all pleasing, but this was something more; it was voice, taste, and execution combined; and approaching the croud, we beheld a female so completely enveloped in a woollen cloak, that figure and face were equally obscure, but her companion disclosed to our view a clean-looking, silver-haired, old man. There was something in the appearance of this couple that

commanded respect. A London mob are, of all others, the most fair and feeling, and I could hear the people around whisper, "What a pity! Poor old man!" then a penny would be drawn from the pocket that perhaps possessed not its fellow, and dropped into the veteran's hat. Although managers are not in general the most tender hearted of beings, my friend Crisp, not yet hardened by avarice, in a moment produced his shilling; the example was too good not to be followed, and as we placed them in the hands of the female, she ceased her song, and with a sigh exclaimed, "May the God of the aged and the helpless bless you!"

The manner, more than the words, convinced me that this apostrophe proceeded from no vulgar lips; and a wish to rescue talent, and I hoped unmerited misfortune, from the degradation but too apparent, was the thought of a moment. When the song ceased, and they were preparing to change their station, I again drew near, and in a conciliating tone said, "'Tis pity so excellent a voice should not be more reputably and beneficially employed." She looked at the old man, then at me, and brushing, as I conjectured, a falling tear from her eye, replied, "Can I be more reputably employed than in administering to the wants of a father, a husband, and three helpless children? As to the voice which you are pleased to compliment,

I devoutly thank heaven for so precious a gift, since it can procure a small portion of bread for those, who otherwise must long since have perished for want."

"Will you call upon me to-morrow at five o'clock?" interrupted I, "I belong to the stage, and doubt not something may be done for you in that line, more consonant with your nature and habits, and much more profitable than what you are now pursuing." I presented my card—she curtsied without speaking, and the old man uttered a benediction, when a voice from the crowd exclaimed, "Come, come, sir, no ridicule if you please; the young woman has seen better days; and the man who would lay a trap for her honesty, deserves to be d——d."

At a time when my heart was nearly overflowing at my eyes with sensations of the purest kind, to be accused of intentions, I should, in any situation, have been ashamed of, filled me with the severest mortification. I turned and looked at the man; he was a young well dressed soldier, and naturally conceiving he had an interest in the wandering melodist, I endeavoured to convince him of the rectitude which guided my offers of service, and I believe succeeded; for after observing, "that he knew gentlemen's general opinion of ballad singers,

but if he had been mistaken in my motives, begged my pardon," he withdrew.

Egerton came up whilst we were conversing, and taking a half-a-crown from his pocket called the young man back, and putting it into his hand, "you are right my mars," said he, "general opinion is not in favour of ballad singing virtue, and your bravely stepping forward in this course, does credit to your feelings as a man, and honour to your profession as a soldier." The young man bowed, but instead of pocketing the money, gave it to the veteran flute player, which so pleased Egerton, that he loudly regretted "his inability to provide for him, and in the same breath begged to hear the *beautiful Maid*." The Song and accompaniment were instantly given, and I thought with great truth and justice; but my eccentric friend snatching the flute from the old man's hand, begged leave to correct a trifling error; "give me leave" said he, "and I'll just set you right in the——but no wonder you are wrong—the instrument is incomplete, it wants the additional patent keys—and the tone too—shocking!" Then making a flourish with some taste, he continued, "I have in contemplation, on an improved plan, a treble barrel flute, which will possess the power of playing first, second and bass, at the same time, and will therefore be of the greatest use to society, by saving two musicians at least in

every concert; and suppose there be a concert, or theatre, in every market town throughout his majesty's dominions, the economy of the plan must be obvious. Besides, my new invention will not only be a wonderful saving in money, but constitution; for you know, wind instruments are esteemed detrimental to delicate people, and if I only save the lives of two men in every town, society will be benefited, and I shall not have lived in vain. But come, I'll give you the Beautiful Maid, after the manner of Braham." He had just carried the instrument to his mouth, when an organ struck up the polacca; this in a moment rivetted Egerton's attention, he forgot the Beautiful Maid, returned the flute to its veteran owner, and before half the strain was over exclaimed, "Oh shocking! that barrel is wrong set;" then running to the grinder of music, he began a conversation upon some improvement which we did not stay to hear, but repaired to the O. P. where he soon after joined us.

Amongst the few people in the room when we entered, was a facetious kind of gentleman familiarly stiled *Bob of the mill*, from a song of that name by which he once rendered himself very popular. As he was the only theatrical person present, we entered the same box, and found him in earnest conversation with an officer just returned from Corunna, the grave of the valiant but ill fated

Moore. He was full of intelligence, and by no means a niggard of it; but entertained the heroes of sham fights, with an animated description of real ones, interrupted every now and then by Egerton's improvements "on the mode of attack, and the better use of the bayonet for the *good of society*."

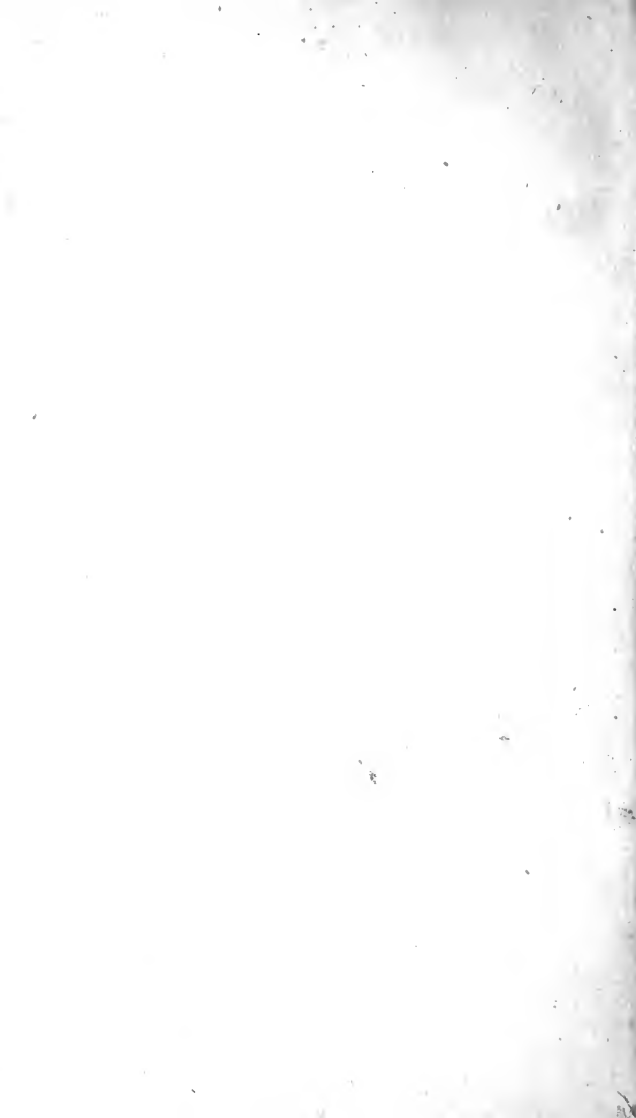
"My dear sir" replied the officer, "if you consult the *real* good of society, study peace, and promote good fellowship amongst the nations of the earth. None know, but those who have experienced it, the horrors of war, and the dreadful scene a field of battle presents, whether successful or otherwise." He then informed us that "in the retreat of our army to Corunna, he travelled fourteen days without shoes or stockings, had not enjoyed the luxury of a clean shirt for five weeks, and that his serjeants wife, he found dead on the road, with her living infant at her breast." Many similar instances of dreadful import he related, till Egerton horrified by the recital, started up exclaiming "Would to heaven those who are the instigators and promoters of war, were obliged to fight her battles, then we should have Monsieurs Bonaparte, Bernadotte, Talien, Soult, &c. &c. on the one side, and Messrs. Percival, Castlereagh, Canning, Hawksbury Melville, Liverpool, &c. &c. on the other; to it they'd go—fight away devils I'd say—and ill betide the man that parts you—give

no quarter—for the sooner you are all destroyed the better for mankind.”

This fight caused a general laugh, and was followed by a bumper toast to *universal peace*. The following day, being the last the managers spent in town, was devoted to a general rummage amongst the Jews; from whom they supplied themselves with dresses suited to every situation of life, from the king to the cobbler, and at four o'clock I saw them take coach to their different establishments, after promising Egerton to follow him in a few weeks.

END OF VOL. IV.









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